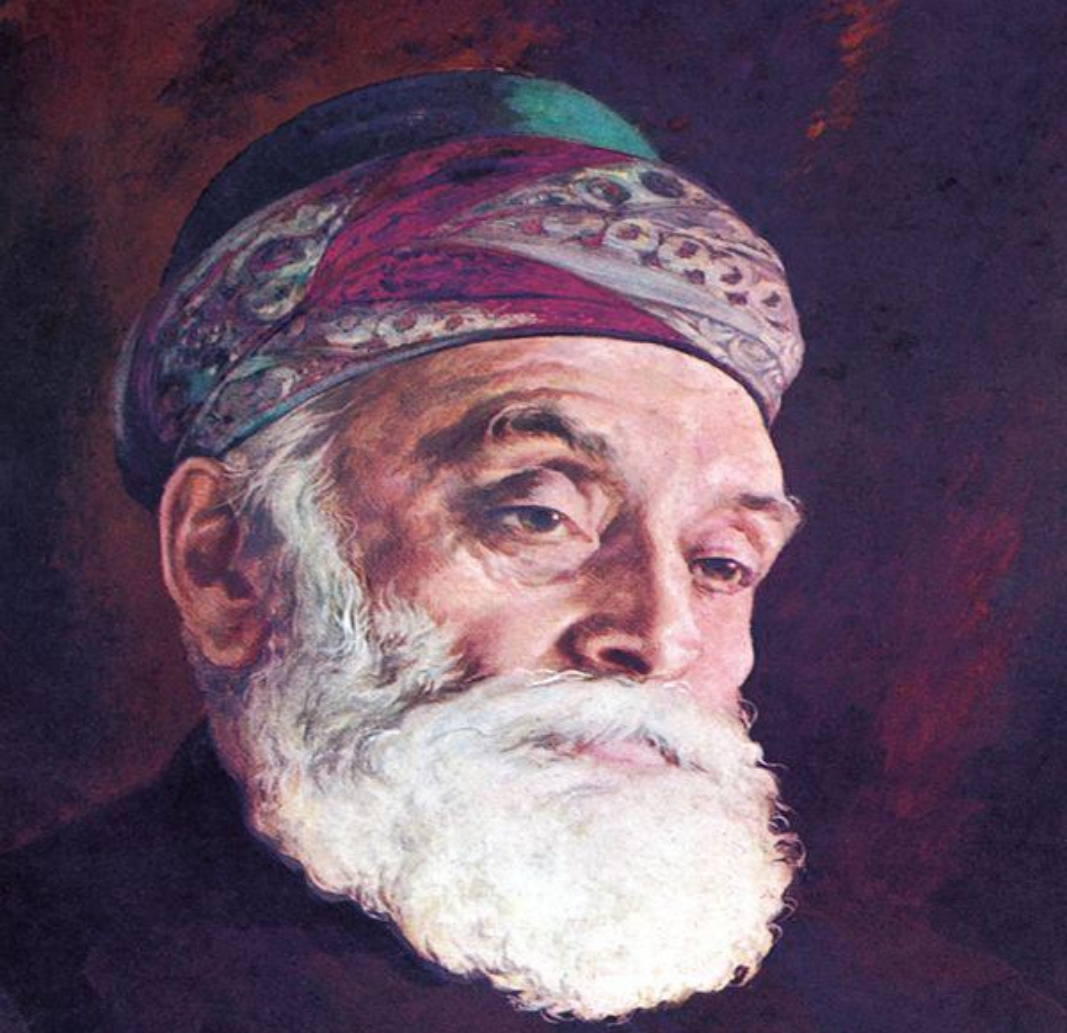

# For the love of India

## The Life and Times of Jamsetji Tata

'Simply marvellous' —*Asianet*

R.M. LALA

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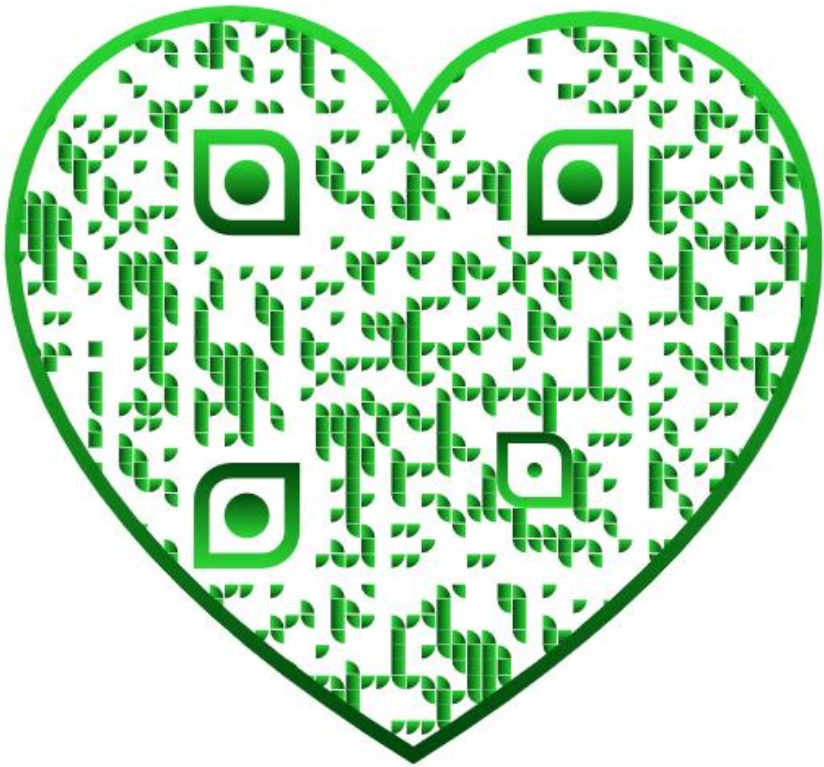

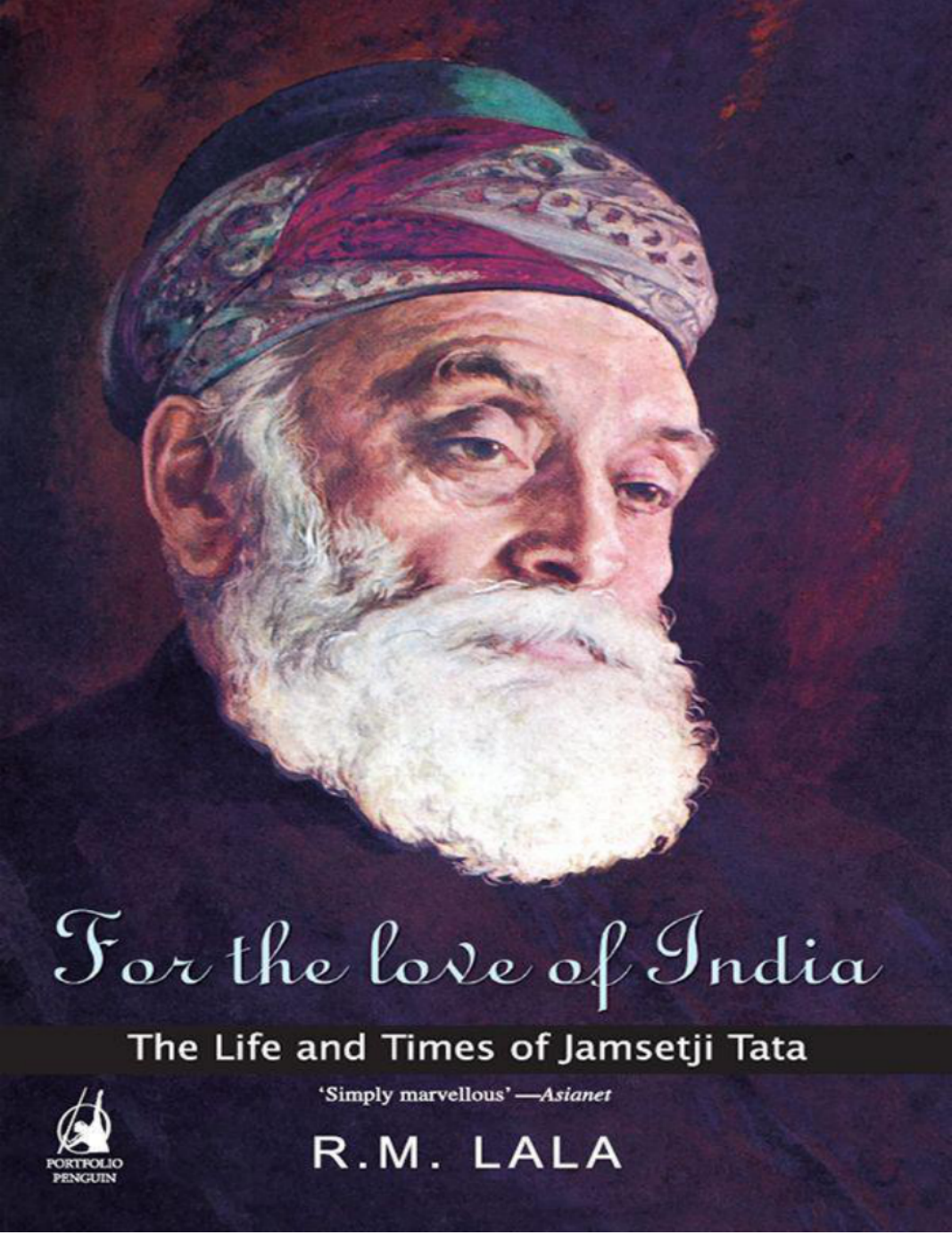

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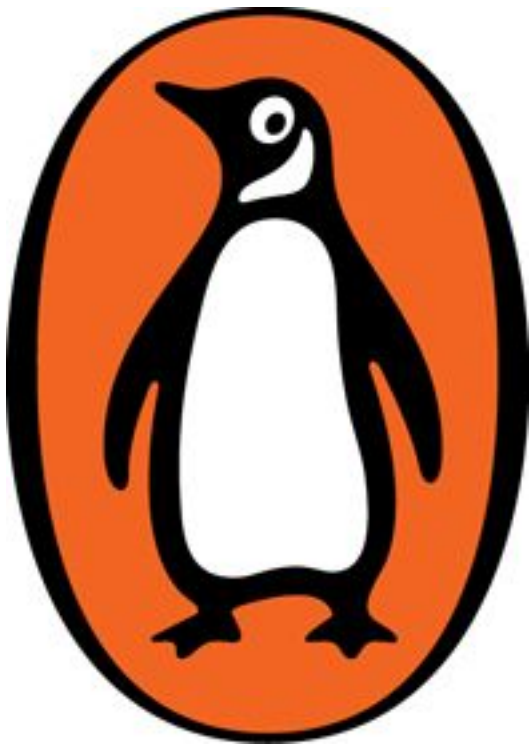

R.M. Lala

# FOR THE LOVE OF INDIA

*The Life and Times of Jamsetji Tata*
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# Contents
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About the Author

By the Same Author

Dedication

Preface

Prologue

Part One: The Preparation

- 1: Man of Destiny
- 2: The Parsi Renaissance
- 3: Education and England
- 4: Fortune Smiles
- 5: The Empress Adventure
- 6: Return to Bombay
- 7: The Struggle for Svadeshi
- 8: Experiments in Egyptian Cotton, Coffee and Silk
- 9: A Venice at Juhu and Other Schemes
- 10: Jamsetji and British Rule
- 11: The Challenge to British Interests
- 12: An Endowment for Higher Education
- 13: The Nation His Business

Part Two: The Man Who Saw Tomorrow

14: The Era of Lord Curzon

15: An Idea Takes Shape

16: The Struggle

17: The Fruition

18: The Preparation

19: Finding the Right Man and the Right Location

20: Unearthing India's Hidden Wealth

21: The Viceroy and the Charkha

22: A New Source of Energy

23: The Current Flows

24: The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

25: The Men Jamsetji Built

26: The Shaping of Jamsetji Tata

27: 1902—The Crescendo

28: The Last Journey

Epilogue: An Evaluation of J.N. Tata: 1904-2004

Appendix I: Will of Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata

Appendix II: The Tata Family Tree

Appendix III: Note to the Secretary of State for India

Appendix IV: Offers of Baronetcy to Jamsetji

References

Footnotes

Preface

1: Man of Destiny

2: The Parsi Renaissance

3: Education and England

5: The Empress Adventure

6: Return to Bombay

7: The Struggle for Svadeshi

8: Experiments in Egyptian Cotton, Coffee and Silk

9: A Venice at Juhu and Other Schemes

10: Jamsetji and British Rule

11: The Challenge to British Interests

12: An Endowment for Higher Education

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14: The Era of Lord Curzon

15: An Idea Takes Shape

16: The Struggle

17: The Fruition

18: The Preparation

19: Finding the Right Man and the Right Location

20: Unearthing India's Hidden Wealth

24: The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

25: The Men Jamsetji Built

26: The Shaping of Jamsetji Tata

28: The Last Journey

Epilogue: An Evaluation of J.N. Tata: 1904-2004

Appendix IV: Offers of Baronetcy to Jamsetji

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FOR THE LOVE OF INDIA

Rossi M. Lala started his career in journalism in 1948 at the age of nineteen. In 1959 he became the manager of the first Indian book publishing house in London and in 1964 he founded (with Rajmohan Gandhi) *Himmat Weekly,* which he edited for a decade. His first book, *The Creation of Wealth,* now available in a revised edition, was published to critical and commercial acclaim in 1981. This was followed by other books, including *Beyond the Last Blue Mountain: A Life of J.R.D. Tata* (1992), *Celebration of the Cells: Letters from a Cancer Survivor* (1999), and *A Touch of Greatness: Encounters with the Eminent* (2001). R.M. Lala's books have been translated into other languages including Japanese. He was the director of Tata's premier trust, the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust, for eighteen years. He is the co-founder of the Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy, and since 1993, its chairman.
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# By the Same Author
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*The Creation of Wealth: The Tata Story* (1981)

*Encounters with the Eminent* (1981)

*The Heartbeat of a Trust* (1984)

*In Search of Leadership* (1986)

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*Beyond the Last Blue Mountain: A Life of J.R.D. Tata* (1992)

*The Joy of Achievement: Conversations with J.R.D. Tata* (1995)

*Celebration of the Cells: Letters front a Cancer Survivor* (1999)

*A Touch of Greatness: Encounters with the Eminent* (revised and enlarged) (2001)

*The Creation of Wealth: Tatas from the I9th to the 21st Century* (revised and enlarged) (2004)

*For three friends*
*Jamshed J. Bhabha*
*Jamshed N. Guzder and*
*Jamshed J. Irani*
*for their thoughtfulness and kindness over the years*
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*Wealth came to him in full measure, but he remained to the last what he was by nature, a simple, modest gentleman, seeking neither title nor place, and loving with a love that knew no bounds the land that gave him birth.*

—Sir Lawrence Jenkins,
Chief Justice of Bombay High Court,
at Jamsetji Tata's Memorial Meeting,
28 March 1905

# Preface
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Jamsetji Tata was a man who saw tomorrow. J.R.D. Tata, who occupied the chair that Jamsetji once did, spoke of the importance of 'the hour of his birth'. Jamsetji's birth in 1839 would turn out to be a defining moment of India's history.

Had Jamsetji Tata been born a couple of decades earlier the political climate was unstable and law and order uncertain. Nor would the industrial climate have been suitable for his dreams. For neither steel had come into large-scale industrial use nor were there railways for speedy transport nor was there electricity.

Had he been born a few decades hence others may have taken the lead in steel, hydro-electric power and higher technical education, though it is hardly likely the same person would have done all three.

Where perhaps he stands alone on the pinnacle is in respect of his vision. He envisaged a project as large as the University of Advanced Research (later the Indian Institute of Science) and laid its foundation at a time when the three Presidency colleges, Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, established thirty years earlier, were yet to come into their own. When his project was first put to the viceroy, Lord Curzon, he asked: 'Where are the students to qualify to join it and where are the opportunities for their employment?'

It was the same approach for his steel plant. It was not only the size of the project but deep conviction that made him enter the cabin of one of the best-known geologists of America and invite him to come to India to prospect for a suitable site. Confidently he told him: 'I will foot the bill.'

The world awakened to the dangers of pollution after World War II. He recognized the danger in his own time and wanted clean hydro-electric power for Bombay, polluted by smoke from the chimneys of numerous textile mills.

His personality first fascinated me when I wrote *The Creation of Wealth* in 1979-80. Since then I have had a chance of thinking,

researching, writing or speaking on him. I realized that the only suitable way to write a biography of Jamsetji is to see him in the context of his time, his education, his travel, his friendships and the ethos of the Parsis of Navsari, from where he sprang.

His lifetime was spent at the height of British imperial power. Lord Hailsham in his Reith Lecture on the BBC in the 1970s noted that the period between the Crimean War 1855 and the naval re-armament of Germany 1906 was the period of unchallenged British supremacy in the world. This is just the period of J.N. Tata's active life.

Three lives of Jamsetji have been written so far. A contemporary of his, employed by him at Svadeshi Mills and who rose to be the president of the Indian National Congress, Sir Dinshaw Wacha, wrote *The Life and the Life Work of J.N. Tata* in 1914. His slim book of eighty-four pages is reinforced with fifty pages of tributes to Jamsetji at a memorial meeting and by the press. The tributes provide considerable insight by Jamsetji's contemporaries into his personality. The epilogue to this book carries a flavour of their assessments.

In 1925 Oxford University Press* published a book written by F.R. Harris, who was a lecturer in History at the London School of Economics. It carried a foreword by Sir Stanley Reed, editor of the *Times of India.* F.R. Harris called his book *J.N. Tata: A Chronicle of His Life.* The faithful chronicler gave in great detail various moves of Jamsetji, for textiles, steel, hydro-electric power and the Indian Institute of Science, and he was honest enough to call it 'a chronicle' and not a biography. Harris has made an invaluable contribution to recording the facts of his life. He had access to papers of Jamsetji which have since been lost, including his diary. He has not, however, covered his struggle with Lord Curzon to set up the science institute nor the offers of baronetcy to Jamsetji covered in the present book.

I have found the most valuable information from papers at the India Office Library and some from the National Archives of India. From the India Office material what I found most interesting were the details of the struggle between Lord Curzon and Jamsetji Tata.† To me this was the most significant test of character for a subject under British rule who could stand for his convictions against the most powerful man in India. He did not live to see Lord Curzon give assent to his project, which came after he died on 19 May 1904. The British thought he would cancel his bequest of fourteen buildings and four landed properties for the institute to be and divert his resources to his iron and electricity projects. Jamsetji held on to his vision till the last. This university, approved by the Governor-General in Council in 1909, is

the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, the fountainhead of India's scientific advance as it is of some of our national laboratories.

In 1970, in the Builders of Modern India Series, the Publications Division, Government of India, issued a *Life of Jamsetji Tata* written by Behram Sh. Saklatvala and K. Khosla. They speak of 'reading through Jamsetji Tata's diary, letters and articles'. Sadly, that material is not available today. The co-author, Saklatvala, was the son of Jamsetji's nephew, Shapurji.

Now, a hundred years after Jamsetji's death, the time has come to evaluate him afresh. In writing this life I found that the most serious gap was in the study of contemporary vernacular papers. Harris primarily depended on the papers Tatas had in the English language and the very important and useful oral contribution of his son, Sir Dorabji. At my request Marzban Giara, a researcher on the Parsi community, kindly undertook the task of studying the journal of *Parsee Prakash* published in Gujarati from Bombay during Jamsetji's lifetime (Editor: Bomanji B. Patel) and beyond. It has proved a goldmine of information and an invaluable source for the evaluation of his personality. Jamsetji features several times and even his small donations are kept track of. It also gives insight into some significant facts of the lives of his two sons—Dorabji and Ratan Tata. Another invaluable Gujarati language source was the *Athornan Namu,* biographical sketches of Parsi priests, published in 1923 by B.U. Behram-Kamdin.

Another gap was details of the Tata Silk Farm only briefly touched upon by earlier authors. The background lay in the records of the Mysore State Archives which Dr V. Subbarayappa, former director of the Centre for History and Philosophy of Science, Bangalore, kindly visited and obtained for me.

In trying to put Jamsetji Tata in his setting I have attempted in the early chapters to present the fledgling but significant setup that was available to him for education even before the first universities were established; how the period of British rule brought security with law and order, the English language and communications through railways, as also posts, which were not available earlier. As India was being knitted together the sense of Indian nationalism arose—and Jamsetji was a part of that and a promoter of it.

The ethos of a man determines the path he follows and Jamsetji's ethos was rooted in his community and its faith, Zoroastrianism. His life and work demonstrates adherence to the principles of the Parsi faith, though there is no record that he was a ritual visitor to fire

temples. The essence of Zoroastrianism is simple, 'Humata, Hukta, Huvarsta'— Good thoughts, good words, good deeds. It is not accidental that he adopted this maxim as his motto.

Sir Dinshaw Wacha was the only biographer who knew him. Wacha writes of Jamsetji's birthplace, Navsari, the citadel of Zoroastrian orthodoxy, 'where rival priestly factions doggedly pursued their opinions in heated debates'. He concludes: 'Doggedness and perseverance were the two traits of the clergy at Navsari', the class Jamsetji belonged to and was brought up in during his impressionable first thirteen years. Jamsetji well demonstrated that trait. He was also among the first to take advantage of education imparted in the English medium.

Jamsetji was born when sailing ships ruled the seas, while horses and bullock-carts transported men and goods. During his lifetime of 65 years the world was transformed. The first steamships with propellers had appeared a year before his birth and came on the India route later to make available speedy voyages between continents. The new steamships enabled Jamsetji to make frequent trips abroad. The journeys were a source of inspiration and new ideas to him. Not only India but the world was coming closer. The Antarctica was discovered when he was nine years old. The first world exhibition in London was held when he was twelve, in 1851. Exhibitions were to be his favourite visiting places in years to come. In 1856 Bessemer invented the revolutionary process for steel making. In the next decade Jamsetji's imagination was kindled at a public meeting in Lancashire upon hearing Thomas Carlyle say: 'The nation that has the steel will have the gold.'

Jamsetji's activities covered a broad range. When writing this life I asked myself: 'What could have been the inputs in the life of one man to have produced such a rich harvest for India?' Certainly his wide reading, his personal contacts with distinguished Indians of his time like Dadabhai Naoroji, and his extensive travels; but all these would not have produced the harvest without an abiding passion to lift India from a predominantly agricultural, subdued nation to a modern, industrialized one—a nation able to hold its own in the emerging twentieth century. I discovered while writing this book that Jamsetji had studied not only about industry but also agriculture with experiments with Egyptian cotton, coffee and silk.

From his trips abroad, he brought back to India whatever he found fascinating, be they living creatures which he kept in his zoo at Navsari or material inventions like the first spun iron pillars which

were displayed at the Paris exhibition and till today are holding up the ballroom of the Taj Mahal Hotel. There was no end to his imagination or his creativity. His four great achievements for which he is remembered today are steel, hydro-electric power, the Indian Institute of Science and the magnificent Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay. The latter was the only grand dream of Jamsetji which he lived to see inaugurated, some months before he died. He said the Taj would bring the world to Bombay. A hundred years later the Taj Mahal Palace—as he called it—still does.

Voltaire ended his *Candide* with the words: 'Let us cultivate our own garden.' Jamsetji did, steering clear of active involvement in politics or meddling in matters that were not his concern. His garden was also a nursery that inspired younger gardeners who caught his vision and ensured that his great projects were accomplished. His sons, Dorab and Ratan, his cousin R.D. Tata, and associates Burjorji Padshah and Bezonji Dadabhoy Mehta in turn became gardeners and carried on and developed on his work.

A good gardener cultivates his plot but also ensures that it is free from weeds. Jamsetji's energies were not wasted on being critical about others; they were used to pursue his own creative goals. 'The final test of a leader,' said Walter Lippman, 'is that he leaves behind him other men with a conviction and a will to carry on.' Had Jamsetji not inspired other men none of his dreams could have been fulfilled after his death and India would have been the poorer for it. A hundred years after he is no more his work marches on.

A chronicle only records. A biographer asks questions and searches for an answer to: What elements constituted the personality of the subject he is writing about? The book is a search for that answer. Working on this book has been a voyage of discovery for the author and he trusts it will be one for the reader as well.

**R.M. Lala**

*Mumbai*
27 November 2003

# Prologue
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The pendulum of the grandfather's clock was ticking away, its shining brass weights reflecting the faint light. Every fifteen minutes its Westminster chimes gently interrupted the silence of the night. It was 11.45 p.m., 31 December 1899.

A bearded gentleman in a white Parsi long coat and a soft black velvet cap sat on a sofa chair in a well-appointed library. He put down the book of poems he held in his hands. With a distant look in his eyes he repeated from Cardinal Newman's poem:

> Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
>
> Lead Thou me on!
>
> The night is dark, and I am far from home—
>
> Lead Thou me on!
>
> Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
>
> The distant scene—one step enough for me.

'More than one step for me,' he murmured to himself with a faint smile.

He had been wonderfully led thus far. 'Once,' he said to himself, 'I've looked for wealth and recognition. Today as the century is ending I am blessed by providence with more than I need. I need nothing for myself but in the years that remain I would like to do something worthwhile for my country and its people.'

He looked back almost twenty years when he planned for a steel plant and abandoned the idea. India was not ready for it. Fortunately the Mahon report now said the time was right. He thought of Lord Curzon, the viceroy he met this day exactly a year ago. Curzon was not enthusiastic about the university of research. Would it come about?

It must.

The only dream for which he needed no difficult permissions or

patronage was a splendid hotel he was planning on Bombay's eastern shore. It would be a landmark for the ships sailing into the harbour.

Was it foolhardy to take on three projects with his not-too-robust health, let alone the hydro-project that lived only in his imagination? 'Will I be spared the time to see them becoming reality?'

By now, he was dozing. He woke up to the sound of sirens from ships in harbour. It was midnight. And not just a new year. It was the start of a new century.

*

In Calcutta, 1200 miles away, on the other side of India, the ballroom of the Viceregal Lodge was lit up. A slow waltz was being played. The guests were all Europeans. Here was a part of the earth that seemed to be 'forever England'. The setting and even the winter night in Calcutta made it appear almost like home.

Drinks were speedily served by liveried waiters as midnight approached. The ship sirens blew as Lord Curzon raised a toast. In a firm voice he said:

'To the Queen.'

'To the Queen,' echoed the guests.

'To the Empire.' Curzon raised his glass once more.

'To the Empire,' the voices echoed.

After the band struck again, Curzon excused himself and went to the balcony. Gas lamps lit the road to the Viceregal Lodge.

At forty-one he was the viceroy of the 'jewel' of the British Empire on which 'the sun never set'. He had arrived just a year ago to the day in Bombay. He had still a good four years to go. Compared to the opulence of the Viceregal Lodge, he mused, 10 Downing Street was quite modest. He recalled his meeting there by the fireside with the prime minister before leaving for India. Even so the Whitehall mansion held a strange fascination for him. If he could prove himself in India, the first step to 10 Downing Street could be cleared, he thought.

# Part One

## *THE PREPARATION*

# 1

# Man of Destiny
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*That he was a man of destiny is clear. It would seem, indeed, as if the hour of his birth, his life, his talents, his actions, the chain of events he set in motion or influenced, and the service he rendered to the country and to his people, were all predestined as a part of the greater destiny of India.*

—J.R.D. Tata from his foreword to *J.N. Tata: A Chronicle of His Life* by F.R. Harris

The year of Jamsetji Tata's birth (1839) came in the middle of a period of change. Eleven years prior to that Lord Bentinck, governor-general of India, decided to reverse the British policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of India. He banned the practice of *sati,* whereby Hindu widows out of presumed devotion to their husbands 'voluntarily' consigned themselves to flames on the funeral pyre of their husbands. In practice, it was far from voluntary and the widow was egged on usually by avaricious relatives eager to lay their hands on her property. The practice was more prevalent in Bengal. For twenty years governor-generals had hesitated to move. When Bentinck (son of a prime minister) acted firmly there was surprisingly little opposition.

For years Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the great social reformer, had campaigned for this action. Downloaded from gappaa dot org. With this move, reformist opinion was encouraged within Indian society and British rule established on a firmer footing. Lord Bentinck also suppressed *thuggie,* the practice in Central India of ritual robbery and murder in the name of Goddess Kali.

The next moves of Lord Bentinck were 'more subtle and in the long run perhaps more far reaching', says Percival Spear in his *History of India.*[*] He adds: 'They amounted to planting Western ideas on institutions on Indian soil and leaving them to grow as they would.' Earlier the British had left undisturbed Indian learning in Persian and

Sanskrit and even started colleges to enable them to continue. Farsighted thinkers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy had realized that Indian intellectuals needed to grasp Western learning and ideas.

In 1829 Lord Bentinck wrote that the English language was the key to all improvements and in 1834 that 'general education is my panacea for the regeneration of India'. In June the same year Thomas Babington Macaulay, essayist and historian, came out to India as the new Law Member to the Governor-General's Council. His famous Minute of 2 February 1835 recorded: 'That the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science' and that such knowledge be 'imparted through the medium of the English language'. Macaulay's object was, in his own words, 'to create a class of persons, Indian in colour and blood but English in tastes, opinions, morals and intellect . . . who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern'. It was a momentous decision which would benefit Indians in the years to come, giving them a world outreach for education and business. Macaulay would have had some little surprise had he returned to England a hundred years later to find in British schools, Indian teachers training children in the use of the English language!

Macaulay's decision set the course of Indian thinking for the next 150 years, for it opened up also a whole new world of liberal ideas of men like Burke and Bentham that were to influence the leaders of India's freedom movement. It also made it possible for Indians to more readily adopt science and technology from the West.

English replaced Persian as the official language.† An early result of this move was the formation of the Calcutta Medical College. Western technology came in useful to the British to train Indian engineers needed to build roads and railways. All empires are road builders by virtue of necessity. It is not only clerks that Macaulay's Minute produced. It was qualified engineers, lawyers, and an elite class of public figures like Dadabhai Naoroji, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Surendranath Bonerjee and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. A creative contact was established between the West and the East. The mistake was that indigenous medicine, which was fairly advanced—in the nineteenth century the Royal Society sent out authorities to India to study Indian medicine—was allowed to fade away.

When Macaulay's measure was accepted by the governor-general in 1836 about two-thirds of India was under British control either directly or through Indian states. Its frontiers ran from east of Sind, up south-east of Punjab and ended at Bengal.

Steadily British rule was extended to the whole subcontinent. Under British rule stability and security were coming to parts of India earlier subjected to varied degrees of lawlessness and anarchy, with petty tyrants extorting money and tributes at will. The British too had extracted a heavy price officially—and otherwise. There was, however, one bright spot. The East India Company was established by an Act of the British Parliament and consequently accountable to Parliament. When its first governor-general, Warren Hastings, was seen as being guilty of financial crime he was tried at a momentous trial in the William Rufus Hall of the British Parliament where King Charles I was tried earlier. In the process the Empire at least acknowledged that Indians had certain rights which had to be respected.

Hastings was tried before the House of Lords in a prosecution led on behalf of the House of Commons by Edmund Burke. The best description of this trial was an essay by none other than Lord Macaulay. 'Edmund Burke,' says Macaulay, in conclusion of his prosecution raised his voice till the old arches of Irish wood resounded: 'I impeach Warren Hastings of high crimes and misdemeanours. I impeach him in the name of the Commons' House of Parliament whose trust he has betrayed. I impeach him in the name of the British nation, whose ancient honour he has sullied. I impeach him in the name of the people of India whose rights he has trodden under foot and whose country he has turned into a desert. I impeach the common enemy and oppressor of all.'

That England was a democratic country was to be India's security against excesses of the British rulers in India.

After the Warren Hastings trial some excellent administrators were sent by the East India Company in place of freebooters. Munro, Malcolm, Bentinck and Metcalfe, who emphasized the obligation laid upon the rulers who had come to trade but stayed to govern. None of them was as sympathetic as Mountstuart Elphinstone, governor of Bombay (1819 to 1827). He wrote Minute after Minute to his superiors in London in favour of educating the Indians. He foresaw Indians governing themselves 'at an immeasurable distance' but felt that it was most desirable if British rule in India was to leave behind people who will 'render it impossible for a foreign nation to retain the Government'. Within a few decades a line of distinguished Indians were to rise and fulfil his vision. Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Jamsetji himself were educated in an institution named after Elphinstone.

Four years after Macaulay enunciated his Minute Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata was born.

Macaulay pointed the way for the intellectual direction for India. The early public figures like Naoroji and Mehta were to give a political direction to freedom. Jamsetji Tata was to lay the foundation for the economic freedom of India.

The Parsi community had landed as refugees from Iran a thousand years earlier. The Parsi faith was founded by Prophet Zarathushtra some time between 1500 and 800 B.C.

Jamsetji was greatly influenced by the tenets of the faith. To understand Jamsetji it is important to know his roots, and the setting that produced a man like him.

# 2

# The Parsi Renaissance

A warm summer breeze blows gently over the plains of Persepolis in Iran. Towering columns rise in the distance supported by a great terrace. The mountains provide a backdrop to the once magnificent palace built by Darius the Great and expanded by successive kings.

As you draw near, several fluted columns, each about sixty-five feet high, stand like chimneys in the distance. Persepolis seems more bare than expected but its grand staircase is well preserved 2500 years after it was built. The staircase and the adjoining platform show carvings of rulers of adjoining kingdoms bearing gifts for the 'King of Kings'. For, the Persian Empire those days extended from Turkey and Egypt to Sind, from the waters of the Mediterranean to the waters of the Indus and the Arabian Sea.

Darius in an inscription near Persepolis declares:

> A great God is Ahuramazda who created this excellent work which is seen by all who created happiness for man, who bestowed wisdom and activity upon Darius the king. By the favour of Ahuramazda, I am of such a sort that I am a friend to Right. I am not a friend to Wrong. It is not my desire that the weak man should have wrong done to him by the mighty, nor is it my desire that the mighty man should have a wrong done to him by the weak. What is right, that is my desire.

On a carving at Persepolis is the image of the king slaying a monster symbolizing evil. Prophet Zarathushtra saw life as a struggle between the forces of good and evil in which good eventually emerged as the victor. He declared that the purpose of man's existence was to be God's ally on the side of good in the struggle against evil and by doing so, Zarathushtra endowed man with a deeper purpose in life, and a dignity that no emperor could rob him of. No wonder that the first Bill of Human Rights was discovered on a clay tablet of the reign of Cyrus the Great and is now housed in the United Nations building in New York. However, all that remains of Cyrus is a desecrated tomb at

Pasargade upon which is inscribed: 'I am Cyrus, who founded the empire of the Persians. Grudge me not therefore this litle earth that covers my body . . .'

The Jewish Old Testament called Cyrus, a predecessor of Darius, 'the Anointed of the Lord'. The Babylonians had conquered Jerusalem and brought the Jews in captivity to Babylon and plundered the treasury of the temple. It was to the credit of King Cyrus to have sent back the Jews to Jerusalem loaded with vessels of gold and silver that their captors had earlier stolen from them. He helped them rebuild the temple of Jerusalem though Judaism was not his faith. This act of generosity in an age marked by cruelty raises him to the rank of Emperor Ashoka.

If Buddhism inspired Ashoka, what was the faith that motivated Cyrus? Who are the spiritual and racial descendants of these monarchs, now hardly 100,000 in number in the world, who hold in their frail hands so rich a heritage?

The story of the Parsis goes back by almost 6000 years to the steppes of south Russia, east of the Volga River. Semi-migratory tribes roamed the steppes, their main wealth being their herds of cattle. The demands of life on the steppes allowed little room for development or change, but over the centuries, they forged a religious tradition of immense strength so that to this day, elements from it are preserved by their descendants, the Zoroastrian Iranians and Vedic Indians. One branch of these sturdy Aryans drifted north-west to create, in the course of time, the Teutonic nations of Europe which includes Germany.

The remaining group split around 3000 B.C. One wing went southwards to what came to be known as Iran, the land of the Aryans. The other migrated south-east towards the Indian subcontinent. They became two distinct people with one common belief in the law of *Asharta,* the truth as represented through the sacredness of fire that had given them light and warmth in the cold steppes.

Another 1500 years were to pass before a prophet arose in north-east Iran. At a time when superstitions ruled and many gods competed for worship, Zaruthushtra revealed the supremacy of the one God, Ahuramazda, the Lord of Light and Wisdom. Zaruthushtra taught that man, God's finest creation, was a rational being whose responsibility it was to think first and then to believe: 'Listen with your ears to the best things, reflect with a clear mind, man by man for himself upon the two choices of decision . . .' He meant the choice between good and evil which he recognized as the two distinct and rival forces of

existence. He taught his people to worship a totally good and perfect God, devoid of any imperfection. He saw the Good spirit to be the creator of life and the Evil one to be the destroyer.

The vitality of the early Persian Empire was inextricably linked with the faith that motivated its rulers and the ruled. Its spaciousness came from the faith of Zarathushtra who, said Tagore, 'was the first Prophet who emancipated religion from the exclusive narrowness of the tribal God, the God of a chosen people and offered it the universal man'. The Prophet stands out as a historical personality who, in the words of Sir Percy Sykes, 'must excite profound reverence when we bear in mind how deep was the darkness around him'.

Professor John Hinnells of Manchester University England, says, 'Zoroaster was the first man known to teach a belief in the one Creator, the devil, heaven and hell, resurrection of the dead, a final judgement and heavenly bliss. As his teaching became the official religion of three great empires ruling much of the known world, including at one time Israel, it inevitably influenced other faiths including Judaism and Christianity.'

Cyrus (about 500 B.C.) and Darius belonged to the Archemeian dynasty. But for a short interruption by Alexander who looted and burnt Persepolis and left his generals to rule Iran for eighty years, dynasties of Zoroastrian monarchs ruled Iran till A.D. 651, when Islam swept over the country.

Some Zoroastrians fled to China where remains of fire temples have been found but the Zoroastrians were assimilated and their identity lost forever. The more fortunate among the Zoroastrians set sail south-east in small boats towards India—the home of their Aryan cousins with whom they once lived on the south Russian steppes. This group of Zoroastrians who came to India were given refuge by the Hindu king Jadhav Rana to start a new life in his kingdom in A.D. 936. Here, in an alien land, the Parsi Zoroastrians were to attain another burst of glory—but before that happened, another 800 years had to go by. After the province of Pars in Iran these Zorastrians were called Parsis.*

Over the centuries, the Parsis started moving mainly north and south along the coast of Gujarat. However, they kept a low profile for the next 600 years. In the sixteenth century, Akbar invited the Parsi high priest, Dastur Meherji Rana, to expound the 'faith of fire'. Akbar was fascinated by his exposition.

The turning point for the Parsis was the arrival of the British in India. In the early seventeenth century, Surat was essentially a Parsi base. It is there the British established their first factory. The Parsis

were quick to learn English and became translators to the new rulers. Rustom Maneck, a Parsi, was the representative in Surat of both the Portuguese viceroy and for the East India Company. Even the nawab of Surat sought his help on matters of state. He skilfully mediated between the Portuguese and the East India Company.

In the eighteenth century, as Bombay developed into a major commercial centre, the Parsis gradually came into their own. No caste system weighed the Parsis down. Unlike the Hindus, many of whom feared excommunication for sailing across the waters, the Parsis suffered from no such inhibition. Added to their flexibility, was the spirit of adventure that spurred them to trade with China across pirate-infested waters. Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy was the best known of the early nineteenth century traders who, undeterred by pirates, went on to become a very wealthy trader and an astute philanthropist and rose to be the first Indian baronet under Queen Victoria.

A renaissance seems to have taken hold of the Parsis around 1850 which resulted in the flowering of their creativity and genius on all fronts. A number of factors converged to make this tiny community forge ahead of the others, bestowing benefits of vision and dynamism upon their adopted homeland.

First, the Parsis established a headstart in the field of education. By 1853 Dadabhai Naoroji, a mathematician, was teaching at the Elphinstone Institution—later a college. A few years later, Jamsetji Tata was to enter its portals. Other men and women also obtained a good education and were influenced by the views of the liberals of England. Education then became the key to the Parsi flowering.

In 1848, Parsi and Hindu reformers started a society to provide school facilities on a wider scale and began with forty-four Parsi and twenty-four Hindu pupils. When the school got into difficulties, four Parsi donors helped it out. The society founded nine schools for girls. The Parsis were the first to pioneer the education of women. Dadabhai Naoroji and his friends often went from house to house to persuade parents to allow their daughters to go to school. In 1855, 740 girls attended the society schools of whom 475 were Parsis, 178 Maharashtrian Hindus and 87 Gujarati Hindus.

Philanthropy flourished—Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy became a legend. An audacious trader with the Far East (he was even kidnapped by pirates), he started the first modern hospital in the East and the spacious J.J. School of Art when there were hardly any primary schools to boast of in the 1850s.

Along with educational awakening came social reform. Hindu

society did not allow marriage of widows, Parsi society did. Both accepted bigamy. In 1855, when the Parsi Law Association was formed, 3000 Parsis turned up at a meeting. The association took the lead and urged the British government to set up a commission to look into Parsi marriage, divorce and succession. In 1865, the Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act was passed and also the Parsi Succession Act. Bigamy was made illegal. The Parsis were again way ahead of others

Alongside with the social revolution came the religious one. In the nineteenth century European scholars unearthed the treasures of the Zoroastrian faith. K.R. Cama (1831-1909) a Parsi layman, was one of the first Parsis to be sent to Europe to study the Avesta language through Western methodology and training. Later, the K.R. Cama Institute was established as a repository for books and a centre for learning.

As the Renaissance in Europe from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century was partly triggered by the study of Greek and Latin classics, so also the Parsi flowering was accompanied by the consciousness of their heritage. 'Civilized man,' said a historian, 'must feel he belongs somewhere in space and time, that he consciously looks forward and looks back.' The Parsis did.

An economic upsurge followed trade with the East. Parsis led in the professions of law, medicine and engineering. In 1851, India's first spinning mill was set up by a Parsi, Cawasji Nanabhai Davar, and in 1854 he converted it into the first modern cotton mill to be run on steam.

To the convergence of educational, social and economic forces, the community added another dimension, the political one. Several Parsis were present at the launching of the Indian National Congress in 1885, of which Dadabhai Naoroji and Sir Pherozeshah Mehta were among the leading lights. Present unobtrusively among the people at the launch of the Congress was Jamsetji Tata. He too was a part as well as a contributor to the renaissance that catapulted his tiny community into the forefront of the country's progress. As J.R.D. Tata said, he could have rested on his laurels or concentrated on making more money. Instead he decided, almost single-handed, to launch India on the path of modern science and industry and to risk his fortune in the process.

The use of the English language among the elite, railways and press all contributed to get Indians to move from a parochial to a national outlook. More than one well-known Parsi said: 'I am an Indian first

and a Parsi afterwards.' The mindset of all groups was being stretched and elevated, their loyalties widened.

The Parsis had fanned out to most parts of the western coast from Surat to Bombay. The two strongholds of the Parsis were Surat and Navsari, a town in the territory of the Gaekwad maharaja of Baroda. The place, originally called Nagmandal (Snakeland), reminded the Parsis of Sari, an ancient city of Iran, and so they called it Nav Sari (New Sari). If Surat was more a commercial centre of the Parsis, Navsari became the intellectual and cultural centre. Until the Holy Fire from Iran was taken to Udvada Navsari was the religious centre too and always had a learned priestly class. A part of old Navsari—still preserved—is Dasturwad, where priestly families used to reside. They were mostly of one storey, with small rooms and a rectangular open space (often with a well) at the back and in front a spacious veranda bigger than any room in the house. In an era without fans, it provided a cool refuge. In one house lives the head priest of today, Dasturji Meherji Rana, and he could show a register of priests ordained father to son for centuries. Among them is the name of Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata, whose ancestry is recorded till the twelfth century.

Around a turn from Meherji Rana's house is a somewhat bigger building that belonged to Nusserwanji Tata, and adjoining it is a small one-storey house. There Nusserwanji's son, Jamsetji, was born on 3 March 1839.

# 3

# Education and England

'This boy will travel, he will become rich, and build a house with seven storeys,' a fortune-teller foretold about a young lad sitting in the veranda of a modest house. The young lad was Nusserwanji Tata, born 1822. Nusserwanji's friends laughed at the prospect of a seven-storied house. In Navsari young men ran around in bare feet and the ambitions of most of them did not extend beyond the city. There were no trains then to speed them on to other parts. Nusserwanji too had laughed at the prospect of a seven-storied house. Even before this prophecy, at the age of five, Nusserwanji was married to Jivanbai, even younger. They were one of ten child couples set in a line to receive showers of rice as part of the Zoroastrian marriage ceremony. As per the prevailing custom, on the marriage day the girl returned to her parents' house and when she matured was sent to the home of her husband. When Nusserwanji was only seventeen, Jamsetji was born. Four sisters followed, Ratanbai, Maneckbai, Virbaiji and Jerbai.

Perhaps spurred by the words of the fortune-teller, Nusserwanji learnt the rudiments of trade from a country banker and shortly afterwards proceeded to Bombay to seek his fortune. He joined a Hindu merchant and general banker and though little educated had ability and resourcefulness. He became the first of his family to do business on an extensive scale, and set his sights on the China trade.

Meanwhile, his son was growing up and after novitiating him into the faith with the Navjot ceremony he became inducted as a 'Navar' into the priesthood. The son was educated in Gujarati. Both the prayers and the arithmetical tables learnt by heart sharpened the memory of the youngster. In Bombay, Nusserwanji appointed private tutors to train him and young Jamsetji attended some classes held by local pundits. In 1856 Jamsetji entered the newly started college section of the Elphinstone Institute. The boy was bright and his fees, which the father could well afford, were waived. He joined as a 'Clare

Scholar'. In 1857 he was a 'West Scholar'. He passed out the following year as a 'Green Scholar'.

At that time there was no university, no graduation and so on passing out they were termed 'Green Scholars'. It is only in the 1850s that the three Presidency colleges were started in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. An English school was set up in 1824 by the Native Education Society and in 1827, out of gratitude to the Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone, who devoted his life to educate the Indians, it was named after him. The Elphinstone Institute was then situated at Tankerville—Gowalia Tank. In Elphinstone's honour a sum of Rs. 2.29 lakh was raised by public subscription to endow two English professorships in the 'arts, sciences and literature of Europe'. Two professors had opened the classes in 1835, just four years before Jamsetji's birth.

Young Jamsetji obviously received a very good grounding in English and till the end of his life, Dickens, Thackeray and Mark Twain were his favourite authors. A grasp of English helped in his travels though he felt a good knowledge of French was essential to travel in Europe and some parts of the Middle East of his days.

Soon after Jamsetji came out of college he was apprenticed to a solicitor's firm. After a short stint he joined his father in business. In a few months, in 1857, he was sent to the Far East by his father. In December that year he founded in Hong Kong the firm of Jamsetji & Ardeshir, the principal partners of which were Nusserwanji Tata, Kaliandas and Premchand Roychand. Roychand was to rise to dizzy heights during the cotton boom of 1864-65, and lose heavily in the crash. The firm exported cotton and opium to China and sent back to India tea, silk goods, camphor, cinnamon, copper, brass and Chinese gold. The firm sent Jamsetji to open a branch in Shanghai which was a city taken over by foreigners for trade with a feeble China.

The American Civil War was raging at the time. It had disrupted supplies of raw cotton from the Southern states to the mills of Lancashire. Desperate for cotton, Lancashire offered India twice the normal price for its cotton and more. Fortunes were made overnight. Imports of gold and silver grew and so did speculative enterprises. Premchand Roychand was the moving spirit of the Asiatic Banking Corporation whose shares were eagerly purchased by the public. He decided to establish a London agency of his firm and asked Jamsetji, who had returned from the Far East, to go to England. Jamsetji set sail in December 1864 carrying a sheaf of bills on the China market and also authorized to dispose of heavy cotton shipments from India to

Liverpool.*

Travel in the sailing ships was no luxury. A contemporary of the period describes the voyage. In the absence of cold storage, live birds and animals and stacks of hay and fodder accompanied the passengers. The contemporary wrote that 'when he woke in the morning to the crowing of cocks, cackling of geese, bleating of sheep and squealing of pigs, he was inclined to think he was asleep and dreaming on an English farm; but the illusion was soon dispelled, because the worst dreams could not conjure up the villainous odour which assailed his nostrils from the nearby pig-pens and hen-roosts'.

Jamsetji, despite his limited experience, had seen signs of the boom coming to an end but Roychand, whom he advised, and others did not heed him. In early 1865 the Civil War wound to a close with the surrender of General Lee. With American cotton supplies opening up again, the crash came. Jamsetji found himself in England. His sheaf of China bills was waste paper. Jamsetji honestly explained the situation to his firm's creditors and bankers and they appointed him the liquidator because they trusted him. He was paid £20 a month—a fair sum for those days. It seems he had dealings in China with one of the creditors and had earned his respect. Jamsetji having come there was not inclined to return soon. He paid frequent visits to Lancashire and acquainted himself with all the intricacies of the cotton trade as well as industry. He was planning to take the leap from being a merchant to becoming an industrialist.

On one of his visits to Manchester he went to a lecture by Thomas Carlyle, the influential English author and philosopher. One remark by Carlyle stayed in his mind. Carlyle said that 'the nation which has the steel will have the gold'.

Jamsetji spent four years in England. The small Indian community doubtless saw a lot of each other. Dadabhai Naoroji became and remained a friend and adviser to Jamsetji and years later was to write to him encouragingly about the steel works he contemplated. Dadabhai used to go about in a black coat buttoned up to the neck, his head covered with a black velvet cap with a small blue tassle. Other younger Parsis followed his style.

At the same time in England was Badruddin Tyabji, who would become the first Indian barrister in Bombay. As a judge of the high court, he became famous for granting bail to Tilak in a sensational case after his application had been turned down thrice. The stimulating company met every Sunday at Dadabhai's house in London. It was also a memorable period in England's intellectual

history, enlivened by the presence of people like Carlyle, Ruskin and John Stuart Mill. Charles Darwin created a storm with his theory of evolution; and Herbert Spencer's ideas on education were respected. Cobden and Bright propagated liberal ideas which Gladstone—four times prime minister—was soon to put into practice. Lord Morley called it 'a generation of intrepid effort forward'.

It was also the period when the first association of Indians, the East India Association, was founded by Dadabhai in London, in October 1866.

Jamsetji could not have found a better setting to prepare for the future. Most of the Indians returned to India about the same time as Jamsetji in 1868. They resumed their acquaintance upon return.

Meanwhile the cotton crash had taken its toll. In the words of Sir Dinshaw Wacha, Bombay 'reaped the whirlwind of its own folly' and sat 'on the stool of its own repentance'.† Some cotton traders had committed suicide. Most were ruined. Nusserwanji was 'not ruined but bruised' and to meet his commitments sold off his seven-storied house in Bombay to establish his credit.

In 1867 an event took place that made fortune smile again on the Tatas.

# 4

# Fortune Smiles

If Britannia ruled the waves in the 1860s the ruler of Abyssinia (Ethiopia), King Theodore, didn't know it. For some years 'he had nursed a grievance against the British Government and in an arbitrary fashion arrested a handful of British subjects, including the British Consul, and lodged them in jail. When two emissaries were sent to get their release they too became guests-in-jail of the king. Britain was not to be treated lightly. General Sir Robert (later Lord) Napier, who acquired Sind for British India, was ordered to mount an expedition against this king who probably was mentally imbalanced. General Napier was Commander-in-Chief, Bombay. He was going into an unknown territory for a war that could last for some months. He demanded supplies for 16,000 of his men for a year.

Nusserwanji Tata had experience of executing such contracts and he got a fair share of the contract. Food, wine, water casks, blankets and all.

Napier landed at Aden in the spring of 1868 and marched to Magdala and took it at little cost to lives. The defeated king took his own life. When Napier was raised to the peerage he took the title of Lord Napier of Magdala. Otherwise it may have been Lord Napier of Sind! The cost of relieving thirty British subjects was a staggering 10 million pounds sterling. The syndicate of contractors earned Rs. 40 lakh and Nusserwanji, with his son, planned to turn his attention to other endeavours. Just then Nusserwanji fell seriously ill and after recovery left on a voyage to China and Japan. Keen on antiques and porcelain he brought back a significant collection of these for his Navsari home which he had enlarged.

Meanwhile, Bombay was discovering a new highway to prosperity. In 1851, before the cotton madness gripped the city, an enterprising Parsi, Cawasji Nanabhai Davar, started the first cotton factory at Tardeo. Another band of gentlemen, many of them Parsis, equally

plucky and enterprising, developed the industry and advanced it to a highly prosperous stage a generation later. Forty-nine mills came up in a couple of decades. All made coarse yarn and were encroaching into Lancashire's markets in the Far East.

Today we can take skilled labour for granted but when Davar pioneered there were no skilled artisans nor skilled supervisors. Machinery came round the Cape of Good Hope and took 120 days on the high seas. There were no railways to move the cotton to the mills from the interior and no telegraphic system. Bullock-carts were used for transportation.

Fortunately for Jamsetji, when he came on the scene both had been established. On return from England Nusserwanji allowed his son to buy—in association with a Bohra merchant—property with an old oil mill in Chinchpokly, near what is now the Bombay Race Course. Jamsetji converted it into a textile mill, called it Alexandra Mill (after Princess Alexandra) showed a moderate profit in two years and sold it.

In 1871 two events took place in the life of Nusserwanji. His daughter born ten years earlier—a fine looking girl— died tragically (we don't know how). She was already betrothed, as the custom then was, to Burjorji Padshah, who became a professor in Sind and later Jamsetji's trusted aide. In the same year Jamsetji's second son was born. He called him Ratan—jewel.

After the sale of Alexandra Mill Jamsetji launched on his real career as a textile magnate. His earlier observations in Lancashire had helped him and these two years had given him a hands-on experience. He returned to England on 23 April 1873 to update his knowledge. He had decided on a future mill and wanted to study the latest machinery.

He loved travel and on his way he arranged a visit to the Pyramids and Alexandria to be followed by a visit to the Holy Land, Palestine. He chose as his companion a Parsi trader he had met in China. This gentleman was 'fired by a noble ambition to be among the first of his community to visit scenes and places which other more effeminate and easy living never thought of doing'. Jamsetji wrote these words in pencil in a diary he kept of his visit. On the first day in the Holy Land his companion started grumbling about the horse ride. For some miles he alternated between riding and walking. And his incessant grumbling 'could have tried the patience of a saint', noted Jamsetji. Then one day Jamsetji saw a curious looking oblong wooden box tied to mules at both ends, carrying a lady of wealth. He thought it an excellent idea to hire one for his companion to sit in comfort.

Excitedly Jamsetji put the proposition to his friend, who replied that 'having had enough trouble with one horse he had no desire to entrust his body to the mercy of two mules'.

Jamsetji was fascinated by the journey from the very beginning. Their way, as he records, 'lay through magnificent groves of orange, pomegranate, peach, apricot and other trees. The first was loaded with magnificent clusters of golden fruit . . . The road was lined with a beautiful and variegated carpet of flowers.'

The party reached Jerusalem at 6 p.m. the same day, and stayed at the Mediterranean Hotel. They did much sight-seeing at Jerusalem and saw many holy relics, each with a story generally resting more on tradition and faith than on history or reason. They saw the place where, on the conquest of Jerusalem, the Crusaders were said to have raised up the Cross. But now only the nails used for fixing it had remained in the stone, the Cross itself having been removed. 'It was said,' Jamsetji wrote, 'the nails were making their way through it imperceptibly, and when they had all passed through, the Day of Judgement would arrive. I don't think any of them had progressed on their journey through more than a quarter of an inch, and I thanked God that the Last Day would not interfere with any of my calculations.

'3rd June, Tuesday—We struck our tents and started at 7 a.m. But before that we were visited by the nuns (one of them very pretty indeed), asking some baksheesh in aid of a charity school for girls they had established in the town; they were Syrians and said they came from Zara. We commended their object and gave a sovereign, on which they thanked us and said they were going to hold a service on our special behalf. We returned thanks in turn. Some bigots would have refused aid to an institution established with the avowed object of spreading Christianity, but we took a more cosmopolitan view, and thought education and the spread of knowledge under any colouring better than ignorance.

'Our lunching place was in a field beneath a large fig-tree adjoining the village of Zarayene. As soon as we were perceived by the villagers to go and rest beneath the tree, the whole population, male and female, young and old, turned out. The women and children kept at a respectable distance, but the men came and formed a circle round our carpet. The women satisfied with the distant view they had of us, returned to the village, but the children joined the men's circle and gazed at us while at lunch to their immense satisfaction. When we were on our way we had to pass the village, and the remainder of the villagers turned out and lined the road. There were some very pretty

young women among them. No veils. And also four boys, two on donkeys and two on very good mares, accompanied us for about two miles, serving as a guard of honour.'

A burly looking Mohammedan turned up as they were leaving the village with a long percussion gun saying the party needed help if bands of robbers encountered them. After checking about the prospects of danger Jamsetji told the self-styled protector that their baggage was full of gunpowder, bullets and bombs that would blow up at a single spark. Their 'protector' melted away.

Mohammed, their local cook for the journey, gave an excellent repast each day while the cook they had from India 'deserved to be roasted on his own spit'.

This brief diary provides insights into the nature of Jamsetji, his generosity, his eye for detail, his love for the beautiful—be it scenery or the faces of children and ladies. It is important too as it is the only continuous piece of writing by Jamsetji in existence.

From Palestine he headed for England. Having inspected and ordered machinery there he returned to India to start his venture.

There are some interesting observations on Jamsetji as a traveller. In the Tata Central Archives at Pune is a loose sheet of paper that gives no idea of the writer or the source. It merits reproduction.

> Mrs Elliot Nicholson—she showed me a small diary in which she had written down two loaves of bread, butter she purchased for him. The young man was very choosy . . . He used to go to bed very early and insisted on two baths a day. Each bath used to cost at that time 8 sh. She could not provide those two hot water baths. Mr Tata would not like to dip in the bath tub with the dirty body, scrub his body and wash his body with the same water in the same tub. He wanted another tub of hot water which she could not provide. Therefore, he used to sit on the ground by the side of the tub and used a mug to take the bath in an Indian fashion. This way he used to spill water all over the bathroom including the carpet. That made the lady very unhappy and always she used to complain about it. He used to say that why do you keep a carpet in the bathroom. He was very fussy to take bath in the morning. He used to take his morning bath before eating or drinking anything. English custom was to take bath in the night. He used to say that I won't take anything unless I take my bath first. About his washing clothes, he used to wash his clothes himself. He would not like anyone else to wash his clothes.

# 5

# The Empress Adventure

When Jamsetji started Empress Mills at thirty-five, he had ‘a peculiar dignity of his own’, as one writer put it. ‘Less than average in height his face was well-modelled.’ Under his regular eyebrows lay deep-set, striking eyes with that faraway look which indicated imagination. He usually dressed in a white long Parsi coat and trousers and wore a black Parsi cap upon his head. Though in later years he grew a beard, in his youth he sported ‘mutton-chops’ down his cheeks as was the custom of English gentlemen including his hero, Sir William Gladstone. Sir Stanley Reed, who met Jamsetji much later in life, at the end of the 1890s, writes: ‘His voice was sonorous and rather harsh; he conveyed to my mind the impression of energy and force of a man of action rather than that of an industrial seer.’

One contemporary observed imagination on his face. The other felt that he exuded the aura of a man of action rather than imagination. That Jamsetji had a blend of both is evident as he set out on his first great venture.

From the start he took a path-breaking role. Where other owners had concentrated on erecting textile mills in Bombay, ‘the Cottonopolis of India’, or in Ahmedabad, he set out to put up his mill where the cotton came from. Soon after return from England in 1873 he set about—probably at Nusserwanji’s suggestion—to find a site outside of Bombay. He located a site in Jubbulpore, north of the Central Provinces, which had proximity to raw cotton and plenty of water from the Narbada falls. He wanted to use the falls to turn the water-wheel to supply power to his mill in 1874, over two decades before his hydro-electric project was to be set in motion![*] He found the perfect site and applied to the government. But on the site was a sadhu with a large following. A riot was feared if he was ejected and the government declined permission. He had to look elsewhere.

He chose Nagpur, in the heart of the cotton-growing district. He

picked on marshy land owned by the raja of Nagpur—ten acres at a low cost—and set about filling it. When a Marwari banker was asked to subscribe to this project, he said he refused to back a man who put gold into the ground to fill up the earth. He lived to admit this gentleman 'had not put in gold and taken out earth but had put in earth and taken out gold'.

Indian cotton goods were prized for 2000 years. Livy, c.59 B.C.-A.D. 17, famous for his history of Rome, complained that textiles from India were draining Rome of its gold. 'During the eighteenth century, the East India merchant who bought muslin in Decca, or silk in Murshedabad carried home consignments of resplendent robes and rich shawls, found that he could dispose of his wares more readily than could a rival who dealt in the calicoes and lawns of Glasgow and Paisley.'†

Key to his enterprise was finding suitable people to run it. Jamsetji had an eye for people. One of the most extraordinary was Bezonji Mehta. Bezonji was a self-made man who had neither education nor influence to help him in his career. At thirteen he was recommended by his teacher, Mr A.F. Moos, to Dossabhai Framji Karaka, then manager of the *Bombay Times* (original name of the *Times of India)*. He was engaged at a salary of Rs. 7 per month to write addresses. At the age of 16 he applied for the post of a ticket issuer of the G.I.P (now Central Railways) at Byculla Station at a salary of Rs. 12, soon raised to Rs. 16. He was transferred to the Goods Department of the railway at Poona.

His work was appreciated and he was promoted to the goods department at Bori Bunder (V.T.) at a salary of Rs. 100 and after another spell elsewhere returned to G.I.P. at Rs. 250 as 'Goods Agent'. It is in that capacity that he seems to have attracted the attention of Jamsetji Tata who must have encountered him sending his business consignments.

Bezonji became his most valued adviser not only on textiles but also on all his later major projects. In 1911 when King George V came to India Bezonji was invited to the Royal Saloon at Nagpur station and knighted. 'I believe you have a splendid mill here,' the king said.

Jamsetji wanted a man of sound common sense and integrity to train as his right-hand man. In two years he trained him to be the manager. On the technical side he was fortunate in having an Englishman, James Brooksby. Jamsetji ascribed the future success of the Empress Mills to these two men and tended to underplay his own role. Initially all the foremen and machinists were from Lancashire,

home to Britain's textile industry.

In 1883 Brooksby, while on home leave, came across ring spindles invented in America. The British were cautious. Jamsetji accepted two ring spindle frames and enthusiastically set his team with Brooksby to work them as an experiment. The stated speed of 6000 revolutions was soon exceeded and Empress with its Indian workers under supervision of British engineers could produce from 9000 to 12,000 revolutions. The ring spindle needed perfection, and it was still to be fully accepted in America. It had few customers in the U.K., which would persist with mule spinning. Jamsetji, according to Dinshaw Wacha (who later worked with him in Svadeshi Mills), gave his supplier Platts in England a chance to benefit from Brooksby's advice. When it was not accepted he went ahead with replacing his Empress Mills with new spindles of Messrs. Brooks and Doxey, the rival manufacturers. The ring spindle pioneers were thus able to secure Jamsetji's orders. And 'every defect in working was pointed out to them so that they might improve on their original pattern and make the machine a perfect one. As a result, mill after mill began to follow the lead of Jamsetji, who had the unbounded satisfaction to see at last the conservative Messrs. Platts falling into a line with their rivals. The rivals, meanwhile, had firmly established their reputation.

Nusserwanji and Jamsetji had floated the Central India Spinning Mills with a capital of Rs. 15 lakh of which about Rs. 5 lakh were of father and son. Nusserwanji was the chairman and Jamsetji the managing director. From the beginning Jamsetji was opposed to the system of agents charging commission on turnover of a mill. He felt commission should be on the profit alone. But at the start he did not charge even that. Instead he fixed his salary at Rs. 6000 per year, a fair sum for those days. He had to run establishments in Bombay and Nagpur. He worked hard setting up the mill. It was opened on 1 January 1877, the day Queen Victoria was proclaimed 'Empress of India', and so he called the mill 'Empress'.

Initially, to save money, he had bought inferior machinery, and the poor quality of the cloth had its effect on the price of the shares, which went down. What is more his loom shed caught fire in 1878. He decided to go to England the same year and buy the latest and the best. In 1881 Empress gave a dividend of 16 per cent, unusual at the time.

Dinshaw Wacha writes: 'Fully convinced of the practicality of spinning finer counts with long stapled cotton, Mr Tata devoted a great deal of his attention to the improvement in the method of

cultivation of the varieties of such cotton grown in different parts of India. Having closely watched the method adopted by the Egyptian ryot he was of the opinion that with a fair amount of intelligence and concrete examples, the Indian cultivator of cotton might be gradually accustomed to that method. He accordingly took pains to put his views in a brochure and describe the method followed in Egypt. But such was the apathy or indifference of those most interested in the industry that nothing came of it. It is gratifying to record that it is to the firm of Tata & Sons that the Government looks for giving them tests of the varieties of cotton grown at different experimental farms. The firm are the official referees on cotton.'

As the Empress Mills began to make large profits by degrees equipment of every shop was replaced. Apart from depreciation and a reserve fund, Jamsetji set aside a renewal fund. Not only was Empress Mills the first major industrial enterprise in the Central Provinces, it would also be first in several innovations, technical and in what is today called human resource management.

It is hard to believe today but in the nineteenth century there was shortage of labour, skilled and semi-skilled. At festivals (there were sixty in number per year) and at harvest time even trained workers remained absent. Absenteeism was 10 per cent to 20 per cent per day. There was no industrial work culture.

Jamsetji and his team set about rectifying this absenteeism. First he gave the workers facilities unheard of in India. Ventilation in the mills and dehumidifying plants. Automatic sprinklers to keep the fluff down. A Provident Fund Scheme in 1886 for all who worked for thirty years without unsanctioned holidays. He set aside money from profits to build his own fund for insurance and in 1887 a gratuitous pension fund. In 1895 came an accident compensation scheme. Some of these innovations came way before the Factories Act of England which made certain measures compulsory on the employer.

Empress held an annual prize day where workers turned up in colourful holiday attire for performance recognition. As many as 1000 workers were called to the platform to collect prizes of gold and silver watches and chains, armlets, medals and bundles of cloth. They did it with obvious pride. It worked miracles for their morale. There was competition among workers. Lethargy and absenteeism were shed. In Jamsetji's lifetime sanitary huts and a dispensary for minor ailments, in 1900, were set up, besides provision for filtered water. Before long both in machines and results, Empress reached the top.

Middle and higher management was trained through a scheme of

apprenticeship. The first Western educated graduates were passing out and had few opportunities. Other mills charged them a fee for apprenticeship, Empress gave them a stipend but asked for a three-year bond. Residential and recreational facilities were created and they were encouraged to study in the library.

As technically and facilities-wise he made the mill second to none so did he ensure that in its business methods and principles it was no less. 'We set our face against the system of charging a quarter anna commission on production— system which has been so much stigmatised and proved so harmful to the mill industry in Bombay . . . Long before factory Acts came into force, we had ever before us the welfare of our employees. For our superior staff, we have recreation and library rooms and playgrounds, which latter, unfortunately, are seldom availed of, there being very little leisure during day time.'

He summed up his position in a speech‡ at the opening of the extension to the Empress Mills in 1895, before the chief commissioner of the Central Provinces: 'We do not claim to be more unselfish, more generous, or more philanthropic than other people. But, we think, we started on sound and straightforward business principles, considering the interests of our shareholders our own, and the health and welfare of our employees the sure foundation of our prosperity.'

In 1878, two years after hiring Bezonji Mehta for the mill, Jamsetji and family shifted to Bombay, his mind at ease that he had found a person to manage Empress. In 1900 he stepped down as managing director. He reduced his own salary from Rs. 6000 to Rs. 2000 per year. He was a substantial shareholder and expected to get his remuneration from enhanced efficiency and higher dividends. In his lifetime it touched 43 per cent on shares of Rs. 500 each. Jamsetji observed: 'That so vast a concern as this has grown to be, can be so successfully managed by a Board of Directors and a firm of agents, having their headquarters five hundred miles away, is in itself a sufficient proof of his (Bezonji's) great merit.'

Jamsetji was now free to spread his wings elsewhere. Jamsetji was unstoppable even after all was well with the working of the Empress Mills. The gratuitous pension fund was for those who had served thirty years. The period would later be relaxed to twenty-five years. In a report to his shareholders he explained: 'The creation of the said Fund is in the interest of our shareholders [for] securing faithful continuous and therefore efficient service . . .'

For years he had never charged any commission. But when he resigned his managing directorship he recommended a 5 per cent

commission to Tata & Sons as agents and 5 per cent commission on net profits.

He was always proud to show people round his mills and was reported to be particularly gratified when a British visitor admired 'the healthy air of contentment in the work people.'

On 5 July 1901, he presided at the opening of the No.3 Mills, when he addressed his audience with the quiet confidence of a man who knows his own power and is justly proud of his achievements. He spoke in no boastful spirit, but as one who endeavours to stimulate in others an effort equal to his own. 'We have continued to enjoy prosperity,' said he, 'even with adverse times to fight against. Our relations with all concerned are the most friendly. We have maintained the same character for straightforward dealing with our constituents and customers. Our productions have continued to be of the same high quality, and therefore command the best reputation and realise the highest prices.' After giving his audience a few brief details of the manner in which the company cared for the welfare of the workers, Jamsetji added: 'I mention these facts only to point with honest and straightforward business principles, close and careful attention to details, and ability to take advantage of favourable opportunities and circumstances, there is a scope for success.'

In the report of the Empress Mills, issued after his death in May 1904, at Bad Nauheim, his fellow directors said of him: 'He never alluded to his own self-devotion, and even self-abnegation, which he exercised on all occasions in its interest. He was never influenced by family or friendly recommendations, and did not choose any employees unless he was satisfied that they would lead to the company's advantage. He accepted only a nominal remuneration for his extraordinary personal services, thus giving practical proof of his zeal for the welfare of the shareholders.' Such was the man who in the words of his contemporary, Lovat Fraser, 'did more for India's material regeneration than any other Indian of modern times'. He began his work at Nagpur. It was work sufficient for any one man, and were his life story to end there, it would still be worth the telling, but the innovative ideas he brought to the Empress Mills were only the first steps in a remarkable career.

# 6

# Return to Bombay

It is a measure of the man that Jamsetji picked in 1876 as manager of his mill a person from the railways who had no background of textiles and in two years trained him so well that he could confidently leave a major enterprise in his charge and return to Bombay. Years afterwards Jamsetji observed, 'It was a lucky day for the company when its present manager entered service,' and complimented Bezonji for his 'forethought and intelligent attention to detail' and 'his unfailing devotion to the interest of the company'.

Jamsetji had organized Empress capably with good assistants but it still does not explain why he left Nagpur in 1878 when the mill was hardly two years old?

There must have been some propelling force that made him bring himself and his family back to Bombay. From 1874 to 1878 the mill could engage Jamsetji's full attention but once freed of the pressure of work, one can only surmise that he wanted to spread his wings beyond one enterprise to other ideas that were brewing in his mind. As early as 1873 he was toying with hydro power for his mill—power almost unheard of even in the West.

Furthermore, Jamsetji may not have found Nagpur as stimulating as Bombay in companionship. He probably looked back to the years in England in the intellectual company of friends like Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta. He was by nature a clubable man and sure enough, on arrival in Bombay not only did he resume some old friendships but started the British custom of establishing more than one congenial club in his city. With Pherozeshah Mehta he established the Ripon Club in 1880. He had a hand in starting the Parsi Gymkhana and the Elphinstone Club. After office each day, he went to one of these clubs—usually the Elphinstone.

Pherozeshah Mehta was gaining recognition as a civic leader, but his interests went beyond civic affairs to assisting the political

awakening of the growing intelligentsia. Jamsetji joined him in starting the Bombay Presidency Association, which provided a forum where political issues could be discussed.

Apart from the political association between the two men they also developed a close personal rapport and they met each week to discuss the issues of the day, as well as personal matters.

Years later, at a memorial meeting for Jamsetji, Sir Pherozeshah would observe: 'The current notion that Mr Tata took no part in public life and did not help and assist in political movements was a great mistake. There was no man who had stronger notions on political matters, and though he could never be induced to appear and speak on a public platform, the help, the advice, and the cooperation which he gave to political movements never ceased . . .'

Jamsetji kept a fond eye on his elder son, Dorab. After his early education at the Proprietary High School in 1875 Jamsetji sent Dorab at the age of 16 to learn from a private tutor in Kent. In two years he was prepared to enter Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. At Cambridge during the two years he was there, he distinguished himself at sport, winning colours at Caius for cricket, rugger and soccer. He also played tennis for his college, coxed his college boat, won a number of sprint events, and was a good horseman. In 1879 Nusserwanji, missing his grandson, felt the young man had been away long enough. Dorab was asked to return. He entered St Xavier's College, Bombay, as would his brother, Ratan, some years after. He graduated in Arts in 1882.

Jamsetji wanted his son to start work immediately. He did not put him in Empress Mills nor send him to the Far East for experience. Instead, he got Dorab a post in the *Bombay Gazette* for two years to learn something of journalism, and in the process widen his horizons. Perhaps it also gave him a certain skill with the English language, which he could later use with telling effect and occasionally a dry sense of humour. On completion of his training in journalism instead of having him at Empress Mills he sent him off to Pondicherry.

While in Pondicherry Jamsetji had seen some mills manufacturing a cloth called 'guineas' because of its popularity in New Guinea and French African colonies where it was imported duty free. The chief attraction was the shade of indigo colour. It probably came from the water of Pondicherry. It was so popular the French government was thinking of transferring its entire dyeing industry to its colony in India.

Jamsetji imported this cloth, tried to manufacture a similar kind

and had it dyed in Pondicherry. It found a ready sale in French Africa but unlike French cloth it was not permitted duty free and was outpriced.

Jamsetji made Pondicherry Dorabji's first assignment. Instead of being the boss's son at Empress he faced the challenge of going to Pondicherry and setting up a mill there. Dorab had to work on getting the clearance for the land of the mill, set up a house with servants for himself and look for local labour—all at the age of twenty-five. Just when he was getting in stride Jamsetji abandoned the Pondicherry plan and called his son back. It is likely that this move may have partly been due to financial unviability of the project and partly prompted by the ill health of Nusserwanji, who may have wanted Dorab nearer to him. Nusserwanji died on 26 January 1886, at his house at Navsari.

Only then was Dorab put in charge of Bezonji for training. Meanwhile, Jamsetji was training two other younger men for the future. Ratanji Dadabhai Tata (known as R.D.) was the adopted son of his wife's brother. Jamsetji had sent the young man for his operations in the Far East which Nusserwanji mainly looked after. He fared well there and showed his competence in accounts at Hong Kong. Impressed, Jamsetji made him a partner in Empress Mills. Jamsetji sent R.D., who was older, with Dorab to the cotton growing area of Berar to establish a ginning factory. R.D. chose to establish the mill at Yeotmal.

Jamsetji was not only training his cousin but giving his son a partner who was to grow in stature in the decades to come. Forty years later Sir Dorabji had in R.D. a colleague who stood by him saving Tatas from the crisis of the 1920s both in the Iron and Steel Company and the Industrial Bank which Tatas had started (later it merged with the Central Bank of India).

In 1887 when Jamsetji established his company Tata & Sons, precursor of today's Tata Sons, he had only two partners, Dorabji and R.D. His son, Ratan, was only sixteen and had to wait to become a partner.

*

After his serious illness of 1871 Nusserwanji had concentrated mainly on his Far Eastern interests leaving his son to deal with the textile industry. Nusserwanji had done very well for himself and imported from the Far East curios and priceless Chinese porcelain.* He had built

a house for himself at Navsari which the maharaja of Baroda visited. The maharaja expressed his appreciation of a few treasures and as was the custom, they were delivered to him in the coming days.

When in Bombay Nusserwanji and Jamsetji used to stay in hired premises not suited to their station in life. At that time few good houses were available. Most of them were cheek to jowl at Bora Bazaar or Parsi Bazaar in the Fort area. Jamsetji ventured a little beyond to the spacious Esplanade Road nearer the sea.

For some years Jamsetji had been planning a suitable residence of his own in Bombay. In the 1880s he chose a site opposite to Bombay Gymkhana of today. There was a maidan in front of it and in those days from the upper floors he could have an unobstructed view of the Arabian Sea in the distance as the waters lapped the shore near the railways line. Marine Drive had not been reclaimed then.

He built it according to his own design and told the architect, one Mr Morris, to follow the classical style. A magnificent marble staircase led up to the house and on one of its ceilings is a beautiful painting. The house was completed in 1887. Nusserwanji, alas, did not live to see it. In it, Jamsetji's favourite place was his spacious library with Victorian bookcases. There in the library he would 'devote a part of the day to contemplation and study' his young relative, Behram Saklatvala, wrote. It is in these moments of quiet and contemplation that his ideas for India's future were to take shape.

The new residence was filled with curios and objets d'art. Some of its features were large rooms, a central courtyard (after the fashion of Spanish patios) a billiard room, and a banquet hall. Esplanade House was among the first houses in Bombay to be lit with electricity and have an elevator and a generator of its own.

It cost Rs. 6 lakh to build. According to *Parsee Prakash,* he entertained the first English cricket team there, various visitors from India and England from the maharaja of Mysore in 1894 to British MPs like W.S. Cain, a crusader against narcotics (1889) and Principal Fairberne of Mansfield College, Oxford, who came to deliver lectures on developing close ties between England and India.

After Jamsetji's death in 1904, his son Sir Dorabji Tata continued to live in Esplanade House. After Dorabji's death, it was sold to the R.D. Sethna Trust.

Jamsetji Tata's first office was in Victoria Buildings on the Parsi Bazar Street in the Fort area. P.P. Mistry, who started his career in Tatas, wrote in 1948: 'I still remember Jamsetji Tata walking in every afternoon on the strike of two, clad in his white Parsi suit with a

round turban made of some Chinese silk and Dorabji coming about the same time with his long china-silk coat unbuttoned. Ratan Tata and R.D. Tata were early comers, both of them dressed in white Parsi clothes.'

The Elphinstone Club was first housed on the third floor of these buildings. Mr Tata's social life was spent mainly at this club, where he often entertained some well-known traveller and talked of world affairs. At the Sunday dinner, he chatted with fellow Parsis.

Victoria Buildings was found too small for the increasing business, and in 1904 the House of Tatas shifted to Navsari Building on Hornby Road. The quaint lift of his time is still in a mood to elevate people up to the fourth floor.

Jamsetji had two weaknesses—good books and good food. At least two instances have been recorded of his reading aloud poetry in his loud, sonorous voice. On one such occasion Lady Ramsay† who had a few friends around her, was treating them to readings from Robert Browning. Unobtrusively, Jamsetji took the book from his hostess and began to read Robert Browning's 'A Grammarian's Funeral' with great gusto. On another occasion when crossing the creek at Salsette he took out from his pocket a small book of poetry and read the poem 'Salsette and Elephanta' by John Ruskin.

Behram Saklatvala, son of Jamsetji's nephew Shapurji, co-authored a short life of Jamsetji Tata‡. He had access to family information and writes:

> At home, his family held him in the highest esteem and affection. He was reserved by habit and this naturally somewhat inhibited others from giving a free display to their feelings. It did not affect their veneration for him and they would freely turn to him for advice or assistance in time of need. He was a friend and partner to his sons as his own father had been to him. He loved his nephews, who reciprocated his affection. He would give them money, and if told that he was spoiling them, he would answer that they must learn the art of spending.

How they felt about these meetings with him can best be described in the words of another nephew of Jamsetji, Sir Sorab Saklatvala: 'My younger brother Behram and myself invariably went into Mr Tata's room every Sunday when we would be asked as to how we had fared at school. If the report was favourable we did not mind giving a few details, but if it was otherwise we felt most uncomfortable. But there was some compensation for us boys, as we had lunch with the family, and it was only then that we enjoyed a plate of ice cream which in those days was a rare treat.' Jamsetji would return home at 9.30 from

his morning drive, and it was after his bath that he would talk to his nephews in his room until lunch time.

Behram Saklatvala's book provides more details on his relationship with the large household. Despite his reserve the tides of his affections ran deep and strong. His mother and his sisters, his wife and his sons' wives, enjoyed his constant attention. They loved him dearly but this love mingled with the awe which a personality like Jamsetji's could not but inspire. It was, therefore, not without some hesitation outside his library door, nor without some sense of trepidation, that they would decide to walk in and disturb him.

Jamsetji was a father-figure to the large and growing household. He insisted that the women should have educational opportunities of a kind which at the time were usually reserved for boys. All of them learned English and were provided a liberal education to the extent it was possible then for women, he says. 'As his prosperity increased, so did his care of his sisters. To each he gave a share from the proceeds of his ventures, and was tireless in his advice and help to them in the upbringing of their children. For one sister (Jerbai) who suffered from ill health and whose marriage had failed, Jamsetji provided what was possibly the finest room in Esplanade House.'

# 7

# The Struggle for Svadeshi

Political consciousness was beginning to spread by the 1880s. The intelligentsia realized that a lot of the wealth of India was being funnelled to England and the need to patronize Indian goods was important. Dadabhai Naoroji was to apply himself for almost the next two decades collecting statistics on the subject that resulted in his classic *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India,* published in 1901. Sixteen years earlier the intellectual ferment among the elite resulted in the first session of the Indian National Congress.

The concept of Swadeshi appealed to Jamsetji. He was too restless to be satisfied without a challenge and he was exploring fresh fields. 'While others concentrated on coarse yarn Mr Tata with his individuality thought that the time had come for taking on a new departure in the industry to making a finer variety of cloth. This meant competing with English inputs. Firmly of conviction that with a long stapled variety of cotton, finer goods could be successfully manufactured, he started a new company for the purpose which he very appropriately named the "Svadeshi". Land was purchased in the vicinity of the Victoria Gardens and all other preliminaries had been completed. It so happened, however, that at the time the largest mill in the Presidency, known as Dharamsi (at Kurla, Bombay) was put up publicly for sale. Jamsetji bid for it and it was knocked down for twelve and a half lakhs. The mill had cost over fifty lakhs and it was thought a cheap bargain at the time. But soon after the acquisition of the factory it gradually became apparent that the mill would require extensive overhaul of a most radical character, so much so that what was once exultingly considered to be the cheapest was going to be the dearest concern. Founded in 1860 in 22 years the mill had an all time record of having been under liquidation four times. Mr Tata, however, had put his foot in it in spite of expert advice to the contrary. It was one of his few great blunders. The mill gave infinite trouble . . .'*

Jamsetji had an eye for property and the 1,50,000 sq. mtrs freehold lands that came with the mill must have been a factor to attract him. It had one of the largest mule rooms in the world, 1300 looms and 1,00,000 spindles.

Though purchased against the advice of his trusted colleagues from Nagpur, once he had taken it on, he worked with such zeal and energy that Jamsetji's subordinates were inspired to put forth their very best efforts. Jamsetji, who lightly called it 'my rotten mill', began his alterations by scrapping antiquated machinery, and set up adequate ventilation and lighting.

On the strength of Jamsetji's growing reputation there was no shortage of subscriptions from shareholders. However, when an early shipment of its coarse yarn was rejected in the China market and the bottom line for the first year showed a loss the share price fell to a fourth of its original value. The Tata name was at stake.

With a remarkable demonstration of energy, acumen and sacrifice Jamsetji put in his private funds and went to the bank for an overdraft. He had made a trust for his family and he offered this as a pledge to the bank. They said it was unacceptable, as it was a trust. He broke up the trust, pledged some shares and sold others. He brought his best men from Empress and within a decade its yarn fetched the highest prices in the Far East market.

He had to struggle on every front, modernizing machinery even though the mill was losing heavily and giving more facilities to the workers. Even in a city like Bombay he had to struggle to get labour. In desperation he turned to the Salvation Army to send some of their reformed people. It was not a great success. He wrote to the lieutenant-governor of the N.W. Frontier Province for hardy Pathans. To the lieutenant-governor of the United Provinces he wrote: 'Men, women and young persons, who may be willing to move here under certain guarantees, can be well cared for and protected, till by slow training they will be able to earn as much as the Bombay operators.' He thought a few of the migrants would write back home and draw fresh workers. The effort to revive the Svadeshi Mills extracted a price on his health. During one of his visits to the Empress Mills at Nagpur he collapsed. Dorab, who was with him, immediately called a doctor. Jamsetji abhorred alcohol but the doctor insisted on brandy and he yielded. Jamsetji was a supporter of the Temperance movement and of the Salvation Army who rehabilitated some of the alcoholics.

He was not even fifty when this happened. He never fully recovered and in the years to follow, his style of business changed. He got less

involved in the day-to-day business. His chronicler, F.R. Harris, whom Sir Dorabji approached to write on his father, wrote: ‘He kept his hands lightly on the pulse of business, and preserved his energies for any new thrust he would take up—which he did.’

Sir Dinshaw Wacha, later president of the Indian National Congress, earlier worked as Jamsetji’s manager at Svadeshi. He wrote in 1914†: ‘Having been closely associated with this reconstruction of the “Svadeshi” for the first seven long years the present writer cannot withhold his admiration of the indomitable courage, business capacity and tenacity of purpose Mr Tata displayed in bringing up the institution.’

The 1890s were to prove the most creative years of his life. In that period he battled on issues concerning the textile industry like tariffs, and a lot more. His objective was to make finer cloth and compete with Lancashire in the Far East market. He found that the P. & O. gave more favourable terms to English shipments to the Far East than to Indian goods though the haul was shorter. He challenged it, going so far as to start a shipping line in cooperation with Japan.

For finer cotton he launched experiments to grow Egyptian long staple cotton in India. He wanted India’s silk industry to be revived and asked for Japanese experts to come out. He even tried to grow coffee in Panchgani where he had one establishment. In the last schemes he had no thought of personal gain. It appears he wanted these more for India.

Observing the virtual miracle of Svadeshi, people expected him to start a third mill and a fourth mill. But he had no desire to do so. Illness at times makes one rethink one’s course in life, to question one’s motivation. His thoughts were turning towards higher goals.

# 8

# Experiments in Egyptian Cotton, Coffee and Silk

Jamsetji's original purpose for buying a second mill was to manufacture finer cloth which was earlier the preserve of Lancashire. There was a steadily rising market for it in India and Japan was catching up with Lancashire in this segment of the market in the Far East. To attain his goal and compete with foreign cloth he needed fine long staple 'Egyptian' cotton. He decided to experiment growing it in India.

He had studied the conditions in Egypt, compared the Indus with the Nile and Sind with Egypt. Egypt's climate March to October was similar to Sind's October to May. 'Such an expansion,' he noted, 'would assist agriculture, conserve the money of this country and improve the exchange.' The experiment would contribute to 'the well-being of the labouring poor'. He was realistic enough to know his aim could not be attained in a day but he decided to harvest over 1896-98. 'I believe that every professional man in India, whether in active business or retired, has some interest in land and nothing can be easier than for anybody to try my proposed experiment on half an acre or so under his immediate supervision.'

As a stimulus, he offered to purchase all good cotton at a fair price and bear himself any loss that any grower might incur on this experiment. It was, however, not an easy venture. The average yield of clean cotton in India was less than thirty pounds per acre, and the best yield below one hundred pounds, against the average yield of six hundred pounds in Egypt.

He found half a dozen volunteers who set aside one acre of land. Jamsetji gave detailed instructions to each one on the proper time of sowing, manuring and watering.

Jamsetji was dealing with amateurs. Irregular rainfall that season did not help. His experiment aroused the interest of the government,

which was trying to experiment with American cotton bred with Indian cotton. The samples were submitted by the government to Jamsetji. He played the role of an agricultural scientist of today.

His own experiment did not succeed but it is noteworthy how his comprehensive mind, always questing, could stride the distance from industry to agriculture with ease. And in each he did his own research in an era of few books and magazines.

His creativity knew no bounds. He had what Matthew Arnold called 'divine restlessness' and turned his attention to growing silk and coffee. Sir Sorab Saklatvala, his nephew, recalls: 'I remember I was studying for my B.A. examination at Panchgani where my mother was staying. Mr Tata, on his way to Bangalore, had come up there. He went to Bhilad, a few miles away, where there was a small coffee plantation. He bought up acres and acres of land and appointed an agent to develop a coffee plantation.' Referring to Jamsetji's interest in strawberries, his nephew writes: 'As we know, at Panchgani as well as Mahabaleshwar, strawberries are grown in abundance. He [Jamsetji] thought there was great scope of increasing the crop and I remember his saying that when he returned from his trip to England he would consider the question of taking up the Panchgani plateau where a jam factory could be built and strawberries grown on the slopes of the plateau.'*

Some idea of what a journey to Panchgani meant in those days is gleaned from Whitney Lynn's *Guide to Panchgani* published in 1913. It records: 'There was no road from Pune. From V.T. Bombay you took a train at 2.15 p.m., got off at Pune. Then at 8.45 p.m. you took another train that landed you at a station called Wathar at midnight. The motor car had not come in then and you were advised to spend the night at a suitable restaurant or restroom at Wathar till day break. Then a Victoria or tonga (Rs. 15 and 10 respectively) would take you 28 miles up a steep hill in five hours to Panchgani. On the steep incline there would be two pairs of horses.' Today it seems intimidating to travel so. Only Jamsetji's interest in the hill station, his vision for its future and his will power—given his ill health—can explain the exertion. He probably foresaw Panchgani's development once the first motor car had arrived in Bombay in 1901. The 'Guide' continues: 'Some years ago the late well-known Parsee gentleman, J.N. Tata, intended buying up Tableland for building purposes, but the English Schools and European residents of Panchgani felt the great loss they would sustain by being deprived of its use—as it is not only the lung of Panchgani but also the rendezvous of all their sports and

recreation—bid for the privilege of retaining Tableland and secured its exclusive use in perpetuity by payment of about rupees two thousand.' The sum paid was more in token of their seriousness than the cost of the land.

The Tableland comprised ninety-seven acres. An added attraction on the plateau, besides its beautiful view of the sunset, was the golf course. The Panchgani guide says: 'The Panchgani Golf Links are excellent and come next to those of Nasik and are said to have been made by a Commander-in-Chief of the Bombay Army. The 18 hole Golf Course covered 2½ miles.'

Jamsetji owned two houses there—Dalketh Home and Dalketh Cottage. The 43-acre property was later donated by Sir Dorabji Tata for a sanatorium, Bel Air, now the finest hospital on the hill station. There was nobody to follow up the coffee experiment and half a century later the land was given to the Bhoodan movement of Vinoba Bhave.

Jamsetji took his experiment to grow silk more seriously. In France he studied the silk industry, particularly the growing of the silk worm, which was a cottage industry. In 1893 on a visit to Japan he found the Japanese skilled at sericulture. He invited two Japanese experts, a husband and wife, to India. R.D. Tata's Japanese servant, who had picked up English, became their translator. Jamsetji sought out a suitable site with a fairly temperate climate and selected Bangalore where he had observed mulberry trees. Through his contacts in Mysore State he obtained a site. He found out that Mysore had a silk industry at the time of Tipu Sultan which had fallen into disuse. It still existed in some villages but the methods used were primitive. He directed the Japanese experts to Bangalore.

Jamsetji was able to get a suitable site. 'He endowed a small farm where Indians could study how the mulberry tree grew, how the silk-worm was to be reared, how the diseases that affected it could be treated, how the cocoon should be looked after, how the silk should be reeled, and how it was prepared for the market. The farm was run on Japanese lines. Indian children were trained to resuscitate the ancient industry of their ancestors. Apprentices were engaged for a minimum period of three months, during which they were given free instructions in all aspects of the industry, from the growth of the mulberry tree to the marketing of the final product. Jamsetji's experiment in silk farming proved a success from the start.'†

While in Bangalore in the 1980s this writer was intrigued by a signboard near the Institute of Culture which read, 'Tata Silk Farm

Crossroads'. He searched for the background. Finally the Mysore State Archives was found to harbour a document that reveals what the farm was all about and what happened to it.

Jamsetji, wiser after his experience with Egyptian cotton, got the help of the Salvation Army. A booklet by F. Booth Tucker,‡ *Experiments by The Salvation Army with French, Italian, Mysore and Erie Silk Worms in India and Ceylon 1910-1911* says:

> A few particulars regarding some of our Indian experiments in sericulture may perhaps be of practical interest.
>
> The Tata Silk Farm in Bangalore. This Institution was established some eight years ago (1902-1903) by late Mr Jamsetji N. Tata. He felt satisfied that what the silk industry required in India was to introduce the same business principles as had been pursued with such success in Japan.
>
> A Japanese expert and assistant were brought over. The Mysore Government gave a rent-free grant of land and an annual subsidy of Rs. 3,000. A small filature of 10 basins were erected, and a garden was planted with various varieties of mulberry bush. It is perhaps a little singular that two such able businessmen as Mr Tata and Sir Thomas Wardle should have gone, one to Japan and the other to France, in search of their models for India. Mr Tata, who was familiar with both countries, gave preference to Japan.
>
> In choosing Mysore as a centre for what he hoped would ultimately develop into a Silk School for India, he was guided by the fact, that the climatic conditions were favourable and that there was a healthy indigenous worm producing an excellent quality of silk.
>
> In this again he gave the preference to the Polyvoltine Mysore worm over both the Japanese and French varieties, though he hoped by interbreeding with the latter that the best features of both races might be combined.
>
> In January 1910, we were requested by his son, Sir Dorabji Tata, to take over the Bangalore Silk Farm, the Mysore Government consenting to the arrangement and continuing the subsidy for a period of three years.
>
> Ensign and Mrs Graham were placed by us in charge of the Institution, and have proved to be capable and energetic managers. Already seven of our European Officers have just been trained and Indian students and ryots have been received and trained from Mysore, Travancore, Madras and Bombay Presidencies, etc. Supplies of eggs and mulberry cuttings have been distributed not only in Mysore but in the United Provinces, Punjab, Baroda, Gwalior, etc. Villagers and students have been trained in the Japanese system of reeling and rereeling silk. A cheap and convenient reeling machine has been manufactured for cottage use. The acreage of mulberry has been considerably increased, several new buildings have been erected, and a number of basins doubled in the filature. Visitors from different parts of India have called, and advice has been sought by numerous correspondents.

> Already the Tata Silk Farm has given birth to three other Institutions of a similar character under our auspices in Ceylon, the United Provinces and the Punjab.
>
> Thus the aim and object of its founder, that the Tata Silk Farm should be a Pan-Indian character, is already being realised.
>
> During the past few months this Institution has been awarded a gold medal in Bangalore, and a silver medal in Madras for its exhibit of the entire process from the silkworm egg to the woven article.
>
> A small weaving school under a trained weaving master now forms a part of this interesting Institution, which is at present still in its infancy, but which possesses in it the nucleus of great future possibilities.

At the time, in Moradabad near Delhi, silkworms were cultivated but the Moradabad silk lacked lustre and consequently had a restricted value. By 1902 when he started the silk experiment Jamsetji was not interested in it for the sake of business. He wanted to give the poor a livelihood and India an industry.

Mr Booth Tucker of the Salvation Army in a letter to Burjorji Padshah, 1 November 1912, wrote: 'The impetus thus given to the silk industry in India can hardly be overestimated. Government, which before had given up the effort in despair, have now recommenced operations. Orders have been issued for the general planting of mulberry trees and bushes. Bulletins and pamphlets have been issued giving instructions regarding the cultivation of silk worms. Public demonstrations have been made in connexion with Exhibitions . . . In the not distant days when silk will have become to India what it is already in such countries as Japan, China, France and Italy, the name of the man who launched the enterprise will be held in grateful remembrance by those who will have been benefited by his forethought and labours.'

In India of today, it is little known that the flourishing silk industry of south India especially was revived by the same man who was to give it iron and steel and hydroelectric power.

# 9

# A Venice at Juhu and Other Schemes

*A pioneer in town planning schemes, Tata, was largely responsible for a modernised Bombay City.*

—The Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, 1972.

*The most notable contribution to the building of Bombay was made by Jamsetji Tata.*

—Rajan Narayan and Sunil Vaidyanath in *The Heritage Buildings of Bombay.*

The bride of Charles II, Catherine of Braganza, brought as dowry with her an obscure conglomeration of islands in Western India. Originally called Mumbai by its fishermen, the Westerners called it Bombay. The dowry consisted of 'the Port and island of Bombay in the East Indies with all rights, territories . . . absolute dominion and sovereignty of the said port, island and premises'.

The centre of Britain's interest in India then lay in Surat where they had a factory. But as the years went by the importance of Bombay's harbour dawned on them. Slowly within the battlements of the island port a city rose. The beautiful bay protected the sailing ships from the fury of the south-west monsoon or attack by an enemy fleet.

As time went by swamps were filled, marshes reclaimed and seven islands were joined to one another. Across the creek to the north lay Salsette, ranging from Bandra (Bundura in the map) in the west to Trombay in the east.

The British realizing the strategic value of the area invited the master shipbuilders of Surat, the Wadias (who had built ships for the Royal Navy that stood the test of Nelson's sea battles), to build their ships in Bombay. The city had shot into prominence and wealth during the cotton boom and was called the City of Gold. It was a small city till the middle of the nineteenth century. There was the governor's residence and secretariat, known as the Bombay Castle. Beyond it lay three gates of outer fortification. The western gate just

further to St Thomas Cathedral was called Churchgate. On the north side was a bazaar where ungainly residences stood packed together, and the gate at the end of it was called Bazaar Gate. It was insanitary within the fort and worse outside it. Sir Stanley Reed, who arrived in India in 1897: 'When the Chartered Bank had the courage to move a 100 yards to the North, old stagers threw up their hands in horror and asked, "Who on earth is going to the jungle to do business?"'

In the mid-nineteenth century, the governor, Sir Bartle Frere, decided that the only way the city could freely expand was to break down the fortification walls.

After the Indian Mutiny or First War of Independence, the Crown took over from the East India Company the administration of India. A line of dedicated administrators followed. In those days the waters of the Arabian Sea came very close to today's Churchgate station and one move of the British was to build an esplanade from Apollo Bunder (at the Gateway of India location) past the present high court towards Victoria Terminus. They put up imposing buildings of Gothic and Saracenic design, the old Secretariat, Central Telegraphic Office and the two magnificent buildings of the B.B. & C.I. (now Western Railway) and the Great Indian Peninsular or G.I.P (now Central) Railway. They had decorated turrets, pinnacles and stately domes.

People don't invest in such structures unless there is political stability and confidence in the future. A confidence which Jamsetji Tata shared. He loved his city and had boundless faith in its growth. Property was a good investment, safe from the vagaries of the market. He was one of the first to foresee the development of the suburbs of Bombay at a time when a place like Worli was looked upon as godforsaken and foxes inhabitated Forjet Hill. His optimism was fortified by the excellent transport system of suburban lines the British were developing, especially to the western suburbs. He was perhaps the first to envision Bombay as a great city of the future not unlike the great cities of the West he had visited.

To give an idea of the condition of suburbs like Santa Cruz, which was used for fox hunting by the British, one Englishman arriving in the mid-1890's wrote:

> As soon as the rains were over the rice fields of Salsette had dried, the tents of the Jackal Club were raised round the kennels at Santa Cruz, about thirteen miles from Bombay, and by the end of November all was ready. Before dawn the field assembled, often it was so dark that a succession of twinkling lights from hurricane lamps showed where the *saises* were piloting their masters over the flats. Others filtered in from the early morning train or from the bungalows round and about, and, as soon

> as it was light enough to see where one was going, the hounds moved off . . . It was easy to be in the Fort area (by train) to begin the day's work by ten o'clock.

It is the trains that helped. Their presence inspired him to develop the suburbs.

By the time Jamsetji had arrived in Bombay from Nagpur in 1878 and settled there, the burra sahibs had built or hired houses at Malabar Hill.

The city was growing and the last twenty years of his life were spent not only in acquiring property but on planning reclamation schemes singlehandedly. Towards the end of his life he put up the Taj Mahal Hotel which opened while he was still alive.

He invested in houses for the British middle class, mainly in a dozen buildings behind the hotel location and gave detailed instructions on facilities to be provided. His second foray was to spot properties in the suburbs which he knew would develop with the coming of local trains. He bought a whole village called Anik over which he had privilege tenure with certain seignorial rights and properties in the islands of Madh and Juhu. This was in addition to his father's property in Navsari and his house in Panchgani. He obtained his plots in Bombay at the capital value of Rs. 30 per square yard and the land's value in two decades was Rs. 1,000 a square yard. He did not believe in selling land though he had to surrender vast tracts to the City Improvement Trust. As he acquired properties he fought battles with the government on rates and taxes in the suburbs which at this distance of time may be of little interest. They can be found in Frank Harris's book.

What is unpublished, unknown and fascinating is a record of Jamsetji's forays into land and reclamation schemes by Jamshedji E. Saklatvala, land and estate agent of Jamsetji from 1899 to 1904. This manuscript was discovered at the Tata Central Archives recently.

Jamsetji was working not just on acquiring plots of land but had sizeable reclamation schemes to transform the suburbs of Bombay. He had a scheme for a small Venice at Juhu. It was virtually a virgin area with mud flats washed by tides at certain times of the day although there was a shoreline.

Juhu itself was a Khote village given in the early nineteenth century to Naoroji Jamsetji Wadia, the well-known shipbuilders, by the East India Company along with the village of Parla (now Vile Parle). There was very little agriculture but toddy and coconuts were its industries.

In course of time they passed into other hands. Before this happened Jamsetji formulated his scheme for an Oriental Venice. As the *Times of India,* 9 April 1926 confirms, 'Up to a decade ago even the name of Juhu was unknown, or very little known beyond the boundaries of the obscure village bearing that name, and the credit of first discovering its unique value as a watering place goes to that great captain of Indian industries, the late Jamsetji Tata . . .' Jamsetji envisaged creating an Oriental Venice between the island and the Ghodbunder Road. This would be accomplished by sluices that would control the creeks at either end of Juhu island, and building plots reclaimed from the marshy land with waterways running between.

The land agent, Saklatvala, writes in greater detail: 'This was an interesting and very clever idea of utilizing to the greatest extent the advantages of nature and the physical features of the land. The area comprised in this scheme was close upon 1200 acres, enclosed between the mainland bounded by the Bombay-Ghodbunder Road on the East, by the Island of Juhu-Tara on the West, Andheri-Versova Road on the north, and by the villages of Santa Cruz and Bandra on the South. This area was to be served by two large and wide openings at both ends northward and south, thus letting in the sea at high tides and flooding the area above described to a height of about 3 feet. This advantage Mr Tata wanted to utilize for building, by reclaiming only one acre plots—about 500 in number, having no roads but trenches or canals dug deep all round each of the reclaimed one-acre plots and establishing communication by boats. The tides every day helping to bring in fresh tide water and regulating the height within the area by self acting sluice gates at both ends, whereby keeping the required level of water every day. It was on account of such a novel idea that this scheme was called the Venetian Scheme. These villages and bungalows that would have been built thereon, would have obtained access by boats through 40' and 30' wide canals. This work of reclamation would have been very easy of accomplishment as the canals that would have been dug would have furnished ample material for each square acre plot that would have been formed.'

The collector of Thana, one Mr Orr, and the commissioner of the Northern Division, one Mr Lely, 'gave a patient hearing and really admired the novel idea of the scheme in all its aspects, and more so from Government point of view. One surmountable obstacle that cropped up was that the land was a Service-Inam granted to the Wadia family who were master-builders in 1850 of the East India Company, now popularly known as owners of the Juhu-Vile Parle

Inam villages. Mr Orr was much in favour of the scheme to be carried out as it would come to be a unique feature of a Town Planning Development. He opined and advised Mr Tata in the first instance to see Mr Ardeshir Wadia, one of the 16 beneficiaries, with whom he said Mr Tata would find hard struggle to treat; and so it proved in this wise.' Jamsetji offered what he felt attractive rates but Mr Ardeshir was a hard nut to crack.

When Mr Ardeshir did not agree Mr Orr asked for inspection of the Inam grant as he had no copy of it in his Thana records. Mr Ardeshir refused to comply although he was bound to give such an inspection. Mr Orr was furious but later succeeded in getting a copy from the Calcutta office and the Bombay Record Office. A Juhu Inamdar's Privy Council suit ensued. 'Under the Privy Council Judgement, the Inamdars gained somewhat, but on the whole they suffered heavily, having had to surrender 400 acres of land free of cost and likewise the whole length of the Juhu-Seashore, about 125 acres, right up to the lowest ebb tide vested in the Inamdars. I have thought it fit to bring this history here to preserve as an important record as to how the Juhu Aerodrome came to be located by Government on its present site.'

This was not all. Jamsetji planned a Mahim River Reclamation Scheme. He delineated the scheme in a letter to the collector. After his death the scheme was pursued by his son, Ratan Tata. That scheme failed because the army would not shift its rifle range. Saklatvala and Khosla* write: 'The need to remove the Rifle Range that stood in their way was also a major difficulty, because of the obduracy of the military authorities. Jamsetji suggested rebuilding the range on a site closer to the railway stations, thinking that this would "find favour with all classes of volunteers and military men". In order to counteract the financial objection that might be made, he added: "Furthermore, if I am required to meet the cost of such a change, I will be only too willing to consider the question." Objections came not only from official quarters. Certain fishermen would not give up their traditional fishing rights in the local waters in spite of an offer of compensation. Then the Bandra Municipality refused to abandon the lease of certain grazing grounds. By the time all the obstacles had been removed, it was 1910, and Jamsetji had been dead for some six years. His son Ratanji developed more than one excellent idea for the improvement of Bombay, but the firm's hands were full by this time, necessitating the postponement of the reclamation scheme.'

While Jamsetji set about these grand schemes he also had one to

relocate all the milch cattle of Bombay island out of the main city (fifty years later this came about). He envisaged buffalo and sheep breeding farms, to be run on scientific lines, on an elaborate scale, and poultry farms introducing European strains. For the milk scheme he wanted to acquire 2800 acres from Bandra to Mahim and extending up to the Kurla Creek of which 120 acres was to be converted to grow special salt bushes to serve as fodder for buffaloes (much relished by them but not suitable for cows). Apparently his information was that it improved the yield of the buffaloes.

Earlier, at Anik and Kurla, Jamsetji had already carried out experimental reclamation on his lands, so that it was against a background of practical experience that he now felt ready to go in for this new and large scheme. As he wrote to the governor of Bombay later: 'Even if the venture should not yield much return, I should still consider myself adequately compensated by the resulting improvement of the value of property in the city where I have large landed interests.'

In view of his interest in modernizing the fishing industry, he was also thinking of converting Mahim Creek into fishponds, stocking them with white salmon, red mullet, prawns and other kinds of fish for supply to the markets of Bombay. He asked for a ninety-nine-year lease of certain areas and for the right to remove material for reclamation, without having to pay the usual charges to the government. He also offered a rent of one rupee per acre, excluding, of course, the Mahim River area. These terms, however, were only the opening move in the negotiations. With typical realism Jamsetji was prepared to consider any reasonable alternative. So he wrote to the governor: 'In conclusion, if my offer here may not be acceptable to Government, I request that Government will be pleased to suggest their own terms and condition.'

In the end, Jamsetji had to himself go to see the governor, as he encountered nothing but obstruction at lower levels. For example, the Telegraph Department was afraid that houses built of inflammable material would be dangerous to their lines. He assured them that such material would not be used and undertook not to disturb the drainage arrangements made by the municipality of Bombay.

Presenting his cattle project Jamsetji wrote to the collector of Thana: 'The chief advantage will be the improvement in the health of Bombay consequent on the reclamation of drowned lands, the malarial exhalations from which are at present carried to Bombay island by the north wind. I propose to clear the swamps of the present growth of

mangrove, and to convert them into a pasture-ground for milch cattle. Some bushes that thrive on salt water yield a most valuable fodder for cattle; and this vegetation would absorb the salt water flowing over the ground at high tide once a fortnight; and thus Bombay would be free of the nuisance of unhealthy winds that pass over tracks which are alternately dry and under water. The pasture-ground would help the health of Bombay not merely by contributing to check malarial breezes, but it would also improve the quality of meat by permitting superior grazing to the cattle brought for slaughter. It is possible that later I may find it not unprofitable to construct large-scale stables on reclaimed ground for the quartering of buffaloes whose accommodation now within the city appears to me not contributory to its health.'

Bombay had to wait for half a century before the cattle stables within Bombay island were shifted to Goregaon.

He also indulged in some of his other fascinations like raising turtles. At his Mahad home there was a small sea water pool and turtles visited the place at full moon to lay their eggs. 'Jamsetji once ordered out very large turtles from Karachi. One was sent to a small lake in his Anik village. It was so big and heavy that one (bullock) cart was required to carry it. He tried to rear English fowls on his Navsari estate but four months later they had all died.'

After his death Dorabji mainly concentrated on his father's great industrial schemes and the Institute of Science. Ratan Tata did try to carry on the father's legacy on properties but sadly he ran into hurdles in most schemes as did his father. One observer noted that it was providential that there were people—not only British—who put obstacles in the development of Bombay so he gave India what would have been given to Bombay. That is one way of looking at it. Even if this observation were true it does not stop us from wondering how one man—Jamsetji—could conceive all this and take the necessary steps. What is astounding is Jamsetji's wealth of knowledge on matters beyond industry. He had no advantage of a research wing, nor is there a record of who helped him. Indications are that on figures and statistics Burjorji Padshah helped Jamsetji if anyone did on the iron and steel project, research institute and the hydro-electric project. Though not recorded, the fact that Ratan took on his schemes for Bombay after Jamsetji's death shows perhaps he was involved in them in his father's lifetime though there is no record of either of Jamsetji's sons accompanying him on his forays. It was a one-man show.

The land and estate agent records that after the age of 60, in the last

five years of his life Jamsetji made seventy trips with him, invariably on weekends. These trips were not made in the comfort of motor cars or necessarily in the suburban trains but by horse and carriage and by smaller boats from one island to the next.

It is believed that Jamsetji imported the first motor car into Bombay and as nobody knew driving, brought in an English chauffeur too. It is recorded that by 1902 Jamsetji had acquired a two-seater Oldsmobile car. It was driven by a Mr Behlihomji, the only Indian amateur driver-mechanic. The estate agent notes that one day while going to a Bombay suburb, 'when the car encountered a high incline it refused to move and so it was myself and Jamsetji and one solitary peasant passing by who pushed the car to climb the ridiculously easy gradient'. Earlier Jamsetji had plans to send the car to Pune. He had asked his estate agent to attempt a trial trip, but after this experience Jamsetji seems to have abandoned the idea!

The estate agent recalls how on one occasion they missed the high tide and Jamsetji had to perforce pass a night in Janjira Creek. That particular trip was undertaken for health reasons. He was a great believer in fresh air which he thought helped him to get a good sleep. The agent writes: 'So, after having had dinner on the boat I made all preparations for him to sleep on an improvised bed by joining two deck benches. This he declined to avail himself of, and he insisted that I should utilise it and that he would like to sleep on the board just near me, for he said by his getting up off and on I would be disturbed in my sleep. I resisted, thanking him at the same time for his kind offer, but he insistently told me to sleep on the improvised bed. Mr J.N. Tata, a man of his position and dignity, offering such treatment to his humble servant!! I thanked him and blessed him.'

# 10

# Jamsetji and British Rule

The year Jamsetji came out of college, Queen Victoria made her proclamation of 1858 in the wake of Britain's victory over the 'Indian mutiny' or 'first war of independence', whichever way one looks at it. The proclamation read: 'We hold ourselves bound to the Natives of Indian territories by the same obligations that bind us to our other subjects . . . In their prosperity will be our strength, in their contentment our security, and in their gratitude our best reward.'

Six years later, at twenty-five, Jamsetji found himself in England. It is there that he seems to have discovered himself. He formed his views and opinions in the company of men like Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta. Every Sunday they and a few others gathered for a Parsi lunch at Dadabhai's house.

It was a time Britain was reckoned to be the most powerful nation in the world. Amidst all its pomp and imperial glory, tempering winds of liberalism were blowing over the British Isles. John Stuart Mill wrote *On Liberty*. Sir John Malcolm, a former governor of Bombay, had already warned some years earlier: 'We are not warranted by the history of India, nor indeed by that of any other nation in the world, in reckoning upon the possibility of preserving an Empire of such a magnitude by a system which excludes, as ours does, the Natives from every station of high rank and honourable ambition . . .

If these plans are not associated with the creation of duties that will employ the minds which we enlighten, we shall only prepare elements that will hasten the destruction of our Empire.'

Liberal ideas clashed with the compulsions of a system where the primary purpose of British presence from its first arrival in Surat had been its commercial interests.

Liberal administrators like Lord Elphinstone in the 1820s and Lord Ripon and Lord Reay late in the century had already set in motion implementation of some of their ideas and earned the gratitude of the

Indian intelligentsia.

Dadabhai and Jamsetji admired Britain's values of freedom and justice. But they were also critical of the impact of British rule on the Indian economy. Dadabhai had compiled statistics to show the drain of British rule on the Indian exchequer and trade over a period of twenty years. Britain's wars launched from India, be it in Abysinnia or Afghanistan, were charged to India's account and its policies so framed that trade always favoured England.

From 1866 with the starting of the East India Association in London Dadabhai repeatedly pointed this out and the wonder was he was supported by a few staunch British in Parliament and outside. His research papers culminated in his book in 1901: *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India.*[*]

The title itself shows the author's leaning and his expectations of the Britain he knew, lived in, and served as member of Parliament.

In giving a credit and debit account of British rule, Dadabhai wrote: 'The present advanced humanitarian civilisation of Britain could not but exercise its humane influence to abolish the customs of *sati* and infanticide, earning the everlasting blessings of the thousands who have been and will be saved thereby. 'The introduction of English education, with its great, noble, elevating and civilising literature and advanced science, will for ever remain a monument of good work done in India and a claim to gratitude upon the Indian people. This education has "taught the highest political idea of British citizenship and raised in the hearts of the educated Indians the hope and aspiration to be able to raise their countrymen to the same ideal citizenship." This hope and aspiration as their greatest good are at the bottom of all their present sincere and earnest loyalty, in spite of the disappointments, discouragements and despotism of a century and half. Britain may well claim credit for law and order, which, however, is as much necessary for the existence of British rule in India as for the good of the Indian people; for freedom of speech and press, and for other benefits flowing therefrom.'

He added: 'I now come to the faults of the present un-British system of Government, which unfortunately more than counterbalances the benefits.'

This impoverishing drain he calculated as 'nearly or above 30,000,000 pounds sterling a year in a variety of subtle ways and shapes; while about the beginning of the last century the drain was declared to be 3,000,000 pounds sterling a year—and with private remittances, was supposed to be near 5,000,000 pounds sterling—or

one-sixth of what it is at present. If the profits of exports and freight and insurance, which are not accounted for in the official statistics, be considered, the present drain will be nearer forty than thirty millions.'

Dadabhai began collecting his statistics in earnest from about 1875, the year Lord Salisbury, the secretary of state for India, said in a Minute, 'The injury is exaggerated in the case of India, where so much of the revenue is exported without a direct equivalent. As *India must be bled* the lancet should be directed to the parts where the blood is congested or at least sufficient, not to those (the agricultural people) which are *already feeble from the want of it.'*

Two years later John Bright observed: 'I say a Government like that has some fatal defect which at some not distant time must bring disaster and humiliation to the Government and to the people on whose behalf it rules.' (Speech in the Manchester Town Hall, 11 December, 1877). Dadabhai had a vision for the British and not only for the Indians. In the introduction to *Poverty and UnBritish Rule in India* he wrote:

> True British rule will vastly benefit both Britain and India. My whole object in all my writings is to impress upon the British People, that instead of a disastrous explosion of the British Indian Empire, as must be the result of the present dishonourable un-British system of government, there is a great and glorious future for Britain and India to an extent unconceivable at present, if the British people will awaken to their duty, will be true to their British instincts of fair play and justice, and will insist upon the faithful and conscientious fulfilment of all their great and solemn promises and pledges.

John Bright said: 'The good of England must come through the channels of the good of India. There are but two modes of gaining anything by our connexion with India. The one is by plundering the people of India and the other by trading with them. But in order that England may become rich by trading with India, India itself must become rich.' Dadabhai inquired: 'Cannot British authorities see their way to such intelligent selfishness?' He was advising 'enlightened self-interest' to Britain before the expression was coined.

There is every reason to believe that Jamsetji shared the thinking of Dadabhai. Like Dadabhai he was for 'self government under British Paramountcy'. Lokmanya Tilak's demand 'Swaraj is my birthright and I will have it' was expressed a year after Jamsetji died. The earlier generation had seen or known of the chaos that preceded British rule.

The thinking of Jamsetji vis-à-vis the British is contained in a draft of a letter to his good friend, Sir George Birdwood, who regularly

received a parcel of mangoes every summer in Britain. Though there is no record of the letter having been sent (it probably was) the draft letter is revealing.

> As for my antipathy to everything English it will reassure you to know that it is a myth. The Parsee . . . becomes anxious when the interests of British supremacy are sacrificed to indulge individual arrogance, or to gratify service glamour, or to perpetrate a new caste domination. That these unfortunate perversions exist, you ought to know even more than I; it cannot be accidental that men like Lords Ripon and Reay, beloved of the natives, were odious to Englishmen. The cases may be rare, but not so rare as to pass unnoticed. In so far as they are noticed, they wound to the heart races as sensitive as they are mild. What should be the duty of a friend of British rule whose vital interests are jeopardized with that rule in danger? Should he harp with tiresome reiteration on the contrast between the past and the present, on the blessings of peace and justice and general state benevolence that have followed centuries of rapine and anarchy and state indifference? He would thus deeply offend the universal sense of justice, hurt the victims of official misconduct, and perhaps give a false sense of impunity to the wrong-doers. That would multiply wrong-doing, and hasten its Nemesis. And then? No, my dear Birdwood, it should be well for Englishmen, even Englishmen in India, to feel that as long as there are two sides to a question, it is using the giant's strength like a giant to put the foot down in every case; that the friends of British rule may sometimes take a side not in favour with the Powers-that-be; and that it is the presence of this criticism that is the only guarantee for right behaviour in young men suddenly placed in positions of power. You call yourself a friend of the Congress, so is Sir William Hunter, so was Sir Richard Garth —all three Conservatives. That in itself shows that the Congress *has* a favourable side. To read the Anglo-Indian organs, to hear English officials, merchants, and brokers, the Congress is ridiculous when it is not mischievous. Will it help the permanence of British rule, if the native, his habits, his ideas, his ancestry, his religion, his hankerings for the past, his aspirations for the future are all equally and perpetually set down as matter to excite derision? Would you wish me to proclaim that the Englishman, like the king of old, can do no wrong?'

Significant in this draft are the words: 'individual arrogance' and 'behaviour in young men suddenly placed in positions of power'. Could it be that Jamsetji had experienced this arrogance in young Englishmen on an occasion or more and been at the receiving end of it? There is a story of a public occasion at the Oval where Jamsetji had left his seat briefly and found on his return an Englishman occupying it. The Englishman thought he would get away with it but Jamsetji stood his ground and finally his own compatriots advised the Englishman to vacate the seat to its rightful owner.

Sir Dorabji showed this draft letter to F.R. Harris. He told the

chronicler that there was a temporary coolness between Jamsetji and Birdwood. Internal evidence points to a difference of opinion upon the aims and methods of the Congress, and to a disagreement between the two men over Jamsetji's preference for travel by foreign shipping lines.

Jamsetji was to fight some battles with the British—on tariffs that affected the competitiveness of Indian cloth, on rates levied on houses in the new suburbs of Bombay, which, in Jamsetji's view, inhibited this development, with textile machinery manufacturers in England who charged him and Indian mill owners more than they did their British customers, over shipping with P & O charging higher rates to shipments from India to the Far East than they did their British customers. On the latter issue he started a rival shipping line to get the rates reduced so India could compete with British textiles in the Far East.

It is natural Jamsetji was in full sympathy with the views of Dadabhai and was present at the first session of the Indian National Congress in Bombay, was financially supporting it and remained a member of the Congress all his life.

On an individual level he remained a warm friend to scores of Englishmen, including several judges of the Bombay High Court. It is not accidental that the buildings he had built behind the Taj—before the hotel came up—were named after Englishmen: Reay House, Roosevelt House, Sargent House, Sandhurst House, Jenkins House and Candy House.

It is significant too that it was Justice Candy of the Bombay High Court, and not Jamsetji that led the delegation to Lord Curzon, viceroy of India, on Jamsetji's scheme to establish a research university.

# 11

# The Challenge to British Interests

Earlier empires were driven by the desire for aggrandizement. Britain's Indian empire was born out of a desire for trade and profits. It was but understandable that when their professed desire to advance the lot of the Indian people clashed with interests of their trade, the latter triumphed.

In the second half of the nineteenth century winds of free trade were blowing over the British Isles. India's British rulers abolished all import duties except on salt and liquor in the early 1880s.

In 1894 due to financial stress the Indian government imposed a duty of 5 per cent on all imported goods but the secretary of state struck out cotton yarn and cotton fabrics from the list. He insisted that if these products of Lancashire were subject to tariff a countervailing excise duty be imposed on Indian cotton goods.

There were strong protests in India from the Imperial Legislative Council and the textile trade but 'so long as Lancashire sends 60 members to Westminster, the British Government will always have 60 reasons for maintaining excise duty'.* Only 6 per cent of the imports involved cotton of fine quality. But even they should not be exposed to Indian competition. Jamsetji attacked the 'false imperialism' that considered the benefit of tariffs only for the Englishman and not for the empire.

It was not so much the amount involved. It was the principle.

The British in defence argued that the Indian textile trade was making huge profits. Of all the mill owners only Jamsetji took upon himself the task of proving it otherwise. In an era when the use of statistics was not much in vogue he set about with the help of Burjorji Padshah to laboriously calculate the profits of Indian mill owners. Some mill owners cooperated while others did not bother. It is he, Jamsetji, who wrote circular letters to mill owners—and not the mill owners' association—to gather the statistics. Through such battles he

emerged as the statesman of India's textile industry.

As F.R. Harris writes, 'About 1897 he decided to set on foot an inquiry into the profits of the past ten years, which would serve as a guide to those who desired the repeal of the excise . . . After sending a circular letter to the principal mill-owners, he deputed his disciple, Burjorji Padshah, who assisted him in his educational schemes, to frame and edit a report up on the results. He printed this at his own expense, submitted it to his fellow mill-owners, and then to the general public. The statistics were compiled with great care and patience, involving months of hard work. Naturally there was some controversy over the figures, but on the whole the report proved a vindication of those who contended that the excise duties constituted a serious burden upon the cotton industry.'

He showed that the average profit of fifty-eight mills was 6 per cent and if his most successful Empress Mills was removed it was only 5 per cent. Jamsetji was, however, realistic enough to see the other side's viewpoint too. He could see that the government needed the finances. Though a wealthy man himself he recommended a graded income tax of 'up to 20 per cent in the top bracket'. Till World War I income tax was negligible. The government had not awakened to its possibilities. The viceroy admitted 'there is not one of us who pays any really serious sum from his income into the Imperial Exchequer'. And they wanted it to stay that way.

Jamsetji may not have been blessed for giving ideas to British rulers but he knew that India's economic condition needed more revenue and he wanted it raised for the country's sake in the correct way according to his light.

In a letter to the *Times of India* on another matter he spelt out his thinking: 'British rule in the abstract is nearly as good as can be in India, and nobody dare cavil at that. But abstract intentions are one thing and serious performances quite another.'

He wrote a pamphlet but did not go beyond the war of words with the government. However, when Britain's shipping interests unfairly kept charging Indian shipments to the Far East more than from British shipments he took upon himself 'the war of freights', as he called it. He would not take it lying down.

It was not on cotton duties alone that Jamsetji wrote. In 1894, 1896 and 1897 he wrote booklets or memoranda on 'Discrepancies in Lord Hershel's report examining the problems of Currency'; on 'Cultivating long stapled Egyptian Cotton in different parts of the country' and on 'Inducting imported labour from Eastern Provinces in the Mills of

Bombay'.

Some years in a man's life are more creative than others. The long sea voyages of old days were conducive to the leisure and thought which alas is absent in today's jet age. They also enabled relaxed conversations with interesting personalities. On one such voyage from Yokohama to San Francisco in 1893 he met a young Indian swami who was to address the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, Swami Vivekananda. Jamsetji received stimulation by his frequent journeys to the West and Japan, which were racing ahead with industrialization. He came back from each journey with new ideas and acquisitions which would range from hydro-electric power for Bombay's polluting mills to greyhounds for his small Navsari Zoo.

His Svadeshi Mills was by now one of the few to make fine yarn and could compete successfully in the Far East with yarn from Lancashire. The prime shipping line, P & O (subsidized by the Indian taxpayer) was charging higher freight rates for Indian goods than for British goods.

Jamsetji first attempted to bypass shipping by P & O by preferring to export at a cheaper rate by the Italian Navigazione Generale Line and the Austrian Lloyd's Line. The three shipping lines then formed a combine and frustrated Jamsetji.

In his part of the world the only other nation that had the strength of a merchant marine was Japan, which had a good trade with India but its shipping lines had not visited Indian ports.

To explore a collaboration Jamsetji went to Tokyo and met the directors of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha Line. They agreed to join him provided he was willing to share the risk and run steamers on loan on his own to compete in the China trade.

Jamsetji was excited by this prospect. During a journey to England he worked out his plans and on landing chartered a ship, the *Annie Barrow,* at 1050 pounds sterling per month. On the voyage he wrote to his sons.

> I suggest that it be called the Tata Line† so that it may serve as an incentive to our family to make it a permanent one, as far as it may be in our power. Then I am going to supply other chartered steamers with our house flag, which is to be blue ground, with Humata, Hukta, Huvarsta, gold circle, human hand with wire and pigeons's wings . . . This, is not only for the good and benefit of our firm or family, but for that of our community, who have lost an old business of theirs: for our mill industry, in which we are so heavily interested, and on which the prosperity of Bombay so much depends. I am an old man now and cannot take any active part in this business, but I will have reason to be proud if the Tata

> family and its young ones make a name in Bombay by efforts directed towards its prosperity and glory . . . After having taken so much trouble I do not mean to retire unless forced by circumstances. I am fairly sanguine of making it a family undertaking as the more I enter into the question, the more sanguine I feel about the success of the scheme.

Thorough as usual he went into the economics of the proposition, calculating the cost of coal and the maximum use of the ships. The new line was to guarantee fixed sailings per year. He did not want the ships idle for even a day. He hoped his rates would lure shippers.

The Nippon Yusen Kaisha loaned him two Japanese vessels. Each vessel was to sail once a month from Japan and carry glass lamps and return from India with goods and yarn. The rates were well calculated. The P & O were charging Rs. 19 per ton. The Tata Line offered Rs. 12 per ton.

The Italian and Austrian lines and P & O would not be pleased, as Jamsetji expected, but he did not anticipate the extent to which they could or would go to foil him.

A 'war of freights' ensued. The P & O reduced its rates, offered rebates, got suppliers to sign agreements that they would not go to the fledgling shipping of Tatas in return for rates that were steadily reduced by P & O to Rs. *1*½ per tonne. They hit below the belt and sent word to the marine insurance market that the *Lindisfarne* of the Tata Line was not fit to carry cargo of cotton. In a letter to the Millowners' Association of 30 November 1893, the consortium of P & O, Austrian Lloyd's and the Italian company wrote:

> Dear Sir,
>
> With reference to our letter of 1st instant, on the subject of rebate on freight, paid on Twist or Piece-goods, shipped to China and Japan by the steamers of the P. & O. Company, Austrian-Lloyd's Company and Navigazione Generale Italiana, please note that we have decided to increase the rebate on such shipments made after 1st December to 25%.
>
> Owing to the unhealthy competition announced to be introduced by a local firm, freights to China will probably fluctuate considerably, and such irregularity must be to the great detriment of trade as you have recognised in previous years, but until further notice this rate of rebate will be continued to those who ship exclusively by the steamers of the three above-named lines. For the next departures the freight is fixed as follows, per ton of 40 feet:
>
> Rs. 6 to Hongkong, Straits and Japan;
>
> Rs. 8 to Shanghai;
>
> And in order to guard the interests of the Bombay Mill Industry, cotton for Japan is charged Rs. 2 per ton higher than yarn to the same ports.

Alterations in rates can from time to time be ascertained at our respective offices.

We are, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

I.M. Sheilds,

Ag. Superintendent, P & O, S. N. Co.

O. Von Hoffer,

Agent, Austrian-Lloyd's S. N. Co.

C. Barboro,

Agent, Navigazione Generale Italiana

Jamsetji was furious. He addressed a petition to the secretary of state for India on behalf of the Tata Line. He laid great stress on the privileged position of the P & O company, towards whose subsidy the revenue of India made a substantial contribution. 'This Company,' he said, 'to whose prosperity the taxpayers of India may lay some claim to have contributed, has driven off all legitimate competition from time to time, either by reducing rates to so low a limit as to exhaust the resources of its rivals, or, failing in that respect, taking such powerful rivals into partnership. The Indian shippers had been forced to endure this tyranny, and had been unsuccessful in their attempts to evade it. They have now, however, been enabled to start a movement in the success of which they entertain every hope.'

He asked the government to afford any legitimate help that the new line might need for the encouragement and promotion of its welfare. Before concluding his appeal, Jamsetji drew attention to the unreasonable rates charged by his rivals, and to the system of rebate conceded to certain favoured firms. He entered a protest against these unfair proceedings. Legal pressure was, as he knew, not within the government's power, but he asked for moral persuasion, and suggested that the secretary of state should remonstrate with the directors of the P & O, a remonstrance which he believed would have a wholesome effect. 'The means,' Jamsetji complained, 'were hardly fair.'

The Japanese stood beside Jamsetji but his compatriots let him down. Jamsetji warned them that once the Tata Line was driven out, the P & O combine would raise their rates again to the earlier levels and even more. Most of the cotton manufacturers who had pledged their support to Jamsetji were lured by the offer of such abnormally low freights and withdrew one by one. When the shipping venture was started it was hailed by the press. Later, however, letters started

appearing which branded Jamsetji as a self-seeker. It was contended that the Tata Line, by supplying cheap cotton to Japan, was putting the yarn trade in Bombay at a disadvantage, and that Tatas were building up a large export market for themselves. Cheap cotton supplies to Japan might induce China to build its own spinning mills and the Tata Line had no stability and might close down any day.

The cotton mills in Bombay did not realize that what Jamsetji was engaged in was a national struggle and not another business for making money. The mill owners would not heed Jamsetji when he warned the P & O could not continue these throwaway rates for long and when the time came they would make up the losses from the same shippers.

Jamsetji admitted defeat. He had no alternative but to close down his line and at the end of the year, the ships were returned.

Had the government done something to ensure that unfair trade practices were not allowed to thrive, there is no doubt that the Tata Line would have heralded the beginning of a modern Indian shipping line a quarter of a century before Scindia Shipping was established. Jamsetji did compel the insurance agents to withdraw their allegation against his hired ship *Lindisfarne.* He lost the big battle, but he did fight.

However, there was a small consolation at the end of the day. Japan's NYK Line established an office in Bombay at the time of the Tata Line and built up a profitable business. Perhaps, it could have done this on its own also. But Jamsetji's earnest and energetic efforts helped it a great deal. What Jamsetji had set out to do for India, he succeeded in doing for Japan—though incidentally. A footnote to the whole episode came by way of the Japanese award to Jamsetji (and R.D. Tata) in 1887, after the failure of the shipping line, of the title 'Sacred Treasure' of the 4th Grade, a 'Kin Koso'.‡

Over fifteen years later, on 25 February 1913, Frank Ritchie, director of the P & O, wrote to Lovat Fraser of the *Times of India,* a friend of Jamsetji's: 'We had some passage of arms with him in bygone days which added interest to the everyday routine work of agency life. The old man died before some of his great dreams were fulfilled and his descendants will reap the benefit of his foresight.'

# 12

# An Endowment for Higher Education

*Our young men have proved that they can not only hold their own against the best rivals in Europe on the latter's ground, but can beat them hollow.*

—Jamsetji Tata in *West Coast Spectator,* 9 February 1899

Jamsetji was among the early Indians to benefit from Western education. He chose the field of business as a career but it did not run his whole life. 'For though Mr Tata was a businessman he was also a scholar . . . Learning was, indeed, his chief recreation and delight,' wrote F.R. Harris. He knew the value of reading and of creative thinking that springs up when a mind is at leisure with itself. Throughout his life he kept time each day for reading and contemplation. In these couple of hours of quiet before he went to office about 1.00 p.m. and usually after dinner, his great schemes were conceived.

Where education was concerned he had studied the remarkable rise of America, Germany and Japan in his time. In each case he ascribed it to science and technology advancing the productive capacity of nations to provide goods and services. The English language gave India an entry to America and England. While a larger scheme was probably brewing in his mind there was another immediate need he perceived; to give advanced education in science, engineering, medicine, the humanities and administration.

No intelligent Indian could fail to observe how efficiently undivided India was administered by about 1000 British members of the Indian Civil Service—even the British at home recognized it as 'the finest civil service in the world'.

It was called the 'covenated service' because there was a covenant between the secretary of state for India and the recruit who had to go through a rigorous test. By the covenant the recruit bound himself 'not to engage himself in trade and not to accept any presents'. For their time they were fabulously paid—1000 pounds sterling per year—well

over Rs. 1 crore of today. The widow of an officer had a pension of 300 pounds sterling per year.

The key to recruitment was to catch them young and train them well once they passed a difficult examination. In 1859 the maximum age was 22. In 1866 it was reduced to 21. In 1878 the age was reduced to 19 'with a probationary period of 2 years to be spent at a University chosen by the Secretary of State'. This made it even more difficult for Indians to enter the service given the standard of education then available in India and the cost of education in England. Nationalist Indians were aware that one impediment to Indians entering it was the age limit.

The figures of admission of Indians to the ICS were:

| Year | Vacancies | Candidates | Indian Candidates | Successful Indians |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1870 | 40 | 382 | 7 | 1 |
| 1880 | 27 | 182 | 2 | 0 |
| 1890 | 47 | 205 | 10 | 5 |
| 1900 | 52 | 213 | 17 | 2 |
| 1910 | 60 | 134 | 20 | 1 |
| 1914 | 53 | 133 | 26 | 7 |

The Indian National Congress took notice of the problem at its very first meeting in December 1885. They wanted the examination for the ICS to be held simultaneously in India. In 1892 Jamsetji launched his Scheme for the Higher Education of Indians. Out of the nineteen scholars awarded the benefit in twelve years up to his death, ten were for studies for the ICS. For example, in 1896 the entry reads:

> **Balak Ram:** Proceed to England and shall prosecute there or elsewhere selected in that behalf the course of studies prescribed for the Indian Civil Service Examination and shall also prosecute such course of higher mathematics as may be prescribed of use to him in connection with the Indian Civil Service.

For some it was studies for ICS in history and political science, for some law, for another science. The scholarship helped them to equip themselves to succeed.

In 1924 when F.R. Harris wrote his chronicle of J.N. Tata's life, he stated that 20 per cent of the Indians in the ICS were J.N. Tata scholars. Jamsetji's objective was primarily to train Indians to administer themselves but it was not the sole objective. In the first two decades Tata Scholars were in medicine, in engineering, and in law too.

The first recruit he selected and signed the agreement with was Miss

Freany Cama to study 'Midwifery and diseases of women and children for a period of two years and to obtain diplomas of the Royal College of Surgeons . . . specialisation at the London Hospital and thereafter to set up as a medical practitioner in this country.' He was sensitive enough to know the reluctance of Indian ladies to go to male doctors at that time.

Also in his lifetime for a similar purpose, the scholarship was awarded to a Miss Krishnabai Kelavkar. The only two agreements that bear his personal signature on the agreements were with the two lady doctors—the rest were signed by Dorab and one other. Initially Jamsetji had made a provision that three out of four selected be Parsis. In practice, he ignored the provision. He wanted the best.

Jamsetji said: 'I can afford to give but I prefer to lend', as thereby the scholarships could go on in perpetuity, there being no pressure to return the money (no interest). He also did so presumably because self-respect and self-esteem are essential for self-actualization.

In the distinguished list of J.N. Tata Scholars have been:

Dr M.D. Gilder, later health minister in the first Bombay Cabinet.

Dr Jivraj Mehta, later chief minister of Gujarat.

Dr Raja Ramanna, physicist.

Dr Jayant. N. Narlikar, F.R.S., astrophysicist (as well as his father earlier).

Dr R.A. Mashelkar, F.R.S., director-general, CSIR.

Dr Jamshed J. Irani, who won the Gold Medal for metallurgy at Sheffield University and was later managing director of Tata Steel.

There is also an array of distinguished ICS officials.

In 1997-98, forty-seven scholars were chosen. In 2001-02, there were 140. The amount given to the scholars is nominal in terms of present day cost of education abroad. In the old days it was substantial. But the scholarship is an enabling scholarship that can open other doors. So great is its prestige, over 2000 apply every year from all over India, as many as 500 are called for interview and up to 150 are chosen.

More than forty years after Jamsetji died, Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India, who was also vice chancellor of Delhi University, wrote a letter to J.R.D. Tata. He recommended for scholarship a member of the schedule caste Paravan of Kerala, who had secured a first class first rank in literature at Travancore University and wanted to proceed for higher studies to England. Sir Maurice wrote: 'I have formed a very favourable opinion of him when he came to see me, and I have no doubt that he is a young man who would take the fullest

advantage of any further opportunities for study which were offered to him and that he has the ability to derive much benefit from them. I was impressed, too, by the way in which he had surmounted the very real obstacles which face a member of his community.'

The Hon. Director of the J.N. Tata Endowment wrote to the trustees:

> He made a very favourable impression at the two interviews. Originally he had intended to take up the study of English Literature but changed over to M.Sc., on Sir Maurice Gwyer's advice. He feels that as an educated member of the Harijan community it is his duty to be in a field of life more dynamic than that of a Professor of English. His parents are very poor indeed; his father's income is on an average Rs. 20 per month for a family of nine; the only other member of his family is the uncle working as a Welfare Officer in the Tata Oil Mills at Tatapuram. Mr Narayanan deserves all possible help.

Narayanan applied for a loan of Rs.16,000 to cover himself for two years. Recognizing his constraints Sir Sorabji Saklatvala, chairman of the J.N. Tata Endowment, wrote: 'I would recommend that he be given a loan of Rs. 1,000 only which I am sure will not be a burden to him, the trusts (Sir Dorabji and Sir Ratan Tata) contributing the balance by way of free scholarship—each trust giving Rs. 7,500.'

The event was recalled in 1997 at the convocation of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences when Vice President K.R. Narayanan (later President of India) began his speech thus:

> It is a great privilege to address the convocation of this institute . . . I have a long very intimate though not formal association with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. In fact I could be considered as one of the first informal students of this institute when it was situated at Nagpada. I was literally stranded in Bombay on my effort to go to London as a Tata scholar. Those were days of the war and there was no ship, so I was stranded here. The very kind and a very dynamic secretary of the Tata Trust for higher education of the Indians, Mrs Piroja Vesugar,* thought I should be helped which I really needed and she talked to Dr J.M. Kumarappa who was the director of the institute at that time and to allow me to stay in the hostel of the institute in Nagpada house. Thus I stayed there nearly for one year in 1944-45. I was a journalist, a reporter in the *Times of India* at the same time and I came to know the first and second batch of the students of the institute, Prof. M.S. Gore, Mr P.D. Kulkarni, Prof. Panakal, Mrs Philis Gore, all of them were friends and I have the privilege of keeping up the contact and friendship with them ever since. I must have acquired a basic inclination towards social work because I happened to marry someone later on who was also a social worker. In a sense I was or I have been a perpetual object of compassionate social work in my life. In any case the stay at Nagpada house enabled me to pick up smatterings of the

knowledge of social work and social science which stood me in good stead in the London School of Economics and later in life.

In the last two decades the demand for higher education has spiralled and so have the fees with the exchange escalating from Rs. 10 per dollar in the 1980s to about Rs. 50 per dollar by early 2000. To meet the demand of brilliant students applying per year the premier trust of Tatas—Sir Dorabji Tata Trust—has contributed Rs. 5 crore for loans and Rs. 2 crore for grants. Even so the quantum per student is a fraction of what is required. The demanding interviews by experts and selection procedures give it an unparalleled standing. There is a pride in being a J.N. Tata Scholar. Even children of well-to-do families apply. In recent years the ambit of grants has widened to up to seventy-five fields of study and a special consideration is given to those who come from deprived or difficult backgrounds.

# 13

# The Nation His Business

Fifty and a man of fortune, everyone expected Jamsetji to start a third* and a fourth textile mill. In America his contemporary John Rockefeller had amassed a staggering fortune with his oil wealth. When asked how much more money he wanted to make, he replied, 'Just a little more!'

A lesser personality than Jamsetji would have been satisfied adding to his wealth creating one mill after the other but nothing small contented him. Jamsetji appears to have decided that business was no longer his main business. The nation was his business. Slowly within him was developing a passion which was to fructify in years to come. His passion was to uplift the poor of his country.

Comfortable as he was in his personal life he was never content with the condition of his fellow countrymen. This is revealed in his letter of 1896 to Lord Reay where he begins with the moving words:

'Being blessed by the mercy of Providence with more than a fair share of the world's goods and persuaded that I owe much of my success in life to an unusual combination of favourable circumstances, I have felt it incumbent on myself to help to provide a continuous atmosphere of such circumstances for my less fortunate countrymen . . .'

And so he focussed on enabling India—an agricultural country—to develop an industrial base, as was already happening in the West.

J.R.D. Tata in his foreword to *The Creation of Wealth* gives an interesting assessment:

> While he shared the spirit of enterprise and the boldness of such men as Rockefeller, Krupp, Leverhulme and Ford, Jamsetji Tata was of a special breed. Having made a substantial fortune from trading and textile industry, he could have rested on his laurels or concentrated on making more money. Instead, he saw that under the exploitation of colonial rule his country was being by-passed by the industrial revolution which was rapidly transforming Europe and America.

> He knew that before the advent of steam and electric power India had, for a thousand years or more, been the most industrialised country in the world, a pioneer and a leader in the manufacture of cloth, iron and steel, ships, and many other products, not to speak of its eminence in mathematics, astronomy, architecture and philosophy. Surely, he thought, the creative and productive genius of such a people could be made to flower again if given the tools which modern science and technology had provided to the people of the West. With that object in view, he decided, almost single-handed, to launch India on the path of modern science and industry and to risk his fortune in the process.
>
> The great projects which he conceived and his sons carried through were successful is less important than the motives with which they were launched . . .

He realized that the key to fulfil his dream of giving industry to his country was not just factories but the training of high level technical manpower. He had been stirred by a speech by Lord Reay, at a Bombay University convocation. Lord Reay spoke of the need in India to give an impetus to learning. The idea struck a chord and over the immediate years his fertile mind spelt out the details.

He developed his idea for a university of advanced research in science, arts and industry, offering the British government a third or more of his entire fortune in the form of fourteen buildings and four landed properties, which, he assured the government, would appreciate with time.

This university was one side of his three-dimensional strategy. The university was to provide the intellectual infrastructure. What was also required to attain the capability of achieving industrial power was the physical infrastructure of steel and hydro-electric power. He had taken an initial step in 1882, just four years after the success of Empress Mills, testing Indian iron ore and coking coal in Germany. India was not ready for it then because the coking coal was not of the required quality. Nor were the rules for mining liberalized enough for private enterprise to move in. From then onwards he had kept his own scrapbook of cuttings of all the minerals found in India. His personal thoroughness in planning was remarkable.

Next he was concerned about the smoking chimneys of Bombay that polluted the air. As mentioned, he went out of Bombay on most weekends as he thought fresh air did him good and enabled him to sleep better. Electricity was then in its infancy. Westinghouse had installed a generator under the Niagara Falls. At his request Westinghouse arranged for him to see it. He envisioned a smokeless Bombay, a clean city with a clean source of energy—electric power.

There was one other contribution he wanted to make, inspired by his love for his city—a hotel worthy of *Urbs Prima un Indes* (the first city of India). A hotel the like of which did not exist in Asia outside of Japan. He poured out his affection to create India's first—and for decades the only—palace hotel. It opened five months before he died.

All these schemes are explored in Part Two of this book. It covers mainly the last ten years of his life when he took steps to accomplish them. He never lived to see three of the four dreams accomplished, but he did draw around him men whose unparalleled devotion he commanded—not only to him personally but also to his vision for India.

Jamsetji had wide sympathies and he supported all good causes that came his way. The *Parsee Prakash*—a remarkable chronicle of all significant activities of the Parsi community from 1860 to 1950—records innumerable donations from Jamsetji to every conceivable charity or good cause from education in schools, including vocational; sanatoriums; flood relief in Surat; earthquake relief in Italy in 1883; maternity homes; memorials to British administrators and educationists who served India with sympathy. The *Arthonan Namu* records that in 1889 he contributed 100 pounds sterling to a fund for starting a new hospital in London to train lady doctors for India. He was appointed a delegate to the Parsi Matrimonial Court on 12 December 1882 and resigned in February 1900. He was appointed a Justice of the Peace in January 1883 and a Fellow of Bombay University on 10 February 1898 for a short term.

President Dr Zakir Husain said: 'While many others worked at loosening the chains of slavery and hastened the march towards the dawn of freedom, Jamsetji dreamed of and worked for life as it was to be fashioned after liberation. Most of the others worked for freedom from a bad life of servitude. Jamsetji worked for freedom for fashioning a better life of economic independence.'†

J.R.D. Tata was to say of Jamsetji: 'Yet this practical man and realist was always to take the far view, to seek not quick returns but the ultimate benefit of India in his schemes and plans; to have in his make-up a good deal of the visionary and dreamer . . . It was because Jamsetji Tata lived in the world of ideas and had imagination that he played the role of pioneer in India in another direction— that of constructive philanthropy.'

What could have given one man such a vision for his nation? A man's vision enlarges with his steady pursuit of it. The fountainhead of those ideas is not only the head but the emotion and motivation

that stirs the person's heart. Moreover, he took time to regularly contemplate and read peacefully in his library; few captains of industry manage to do so today.

Jamsetji was a thinker, a planner and an executor of his plans—a rare combination.

What else was so distinctive about Jamsetji?

Sir Stanley Reed, who knew Jamsetji well, speaks of Jamsetji's 'doctrine of service' adding that 'to ignore the missionary spirit in business is to be blind to one of the strongest forces in the world; to fail to discern the patriotic objective in Mr Tata's enterprises is to miss the real lesson which the life of the great Indian has for the present generation.'‡ Reed says that Jamsetji 'almost alone in his generation' realized that the economic foundations of India to be secure had to be based on science for effective production and hence the future Indian Institute of Science was such a distinctive contribution to India.

The second part seeks to unravel one man's mission to leverage India in the comity of nations and the steps he took in that direction. Most of these efforts were during the regime of Lord Curzon.

# Part Two

## *THE MAN WHO SAW TOMORROW*

*There was only one man who looked boldly to the future and peering beyond the hand-to-mouth practice of his competitors discerned the possibility of an India which would embrace the complete economic cycle. That man was Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata.*

—Sir Stanley Reed, Editor, *The Times of India,* 1907-1923

# 14

# The Era of Lord Curzon

The winds of change in Britain were beginning to impact India. 'The liberal upsurge in Britain associated with Gladstone between 1868 and 1886 found its way to India with Lord Ripon (1880-84). Ideas of self-government were for a time once more in the air. Gladstone announced that it was "our weakness and out calamity" that "we have not been able to give to India the benefits and blessings of free institutions".'*

The political precipitation of Ripon's measures—which included a system of local self-government—was to be the Indian National Congress born in 1885.

Ripon was followed by Lord Dufferin, 'who did nothing in particular and did it very well', as a British historian .put it. Lord Lansdowne, the aristocrat followed, succeeded by a Scottish working class peer, Lord Elgin, in 1894.

It was a period of immense activity as the railways expanded and canals were dug. While basic literacy lagged, there was some progress in respect of higher education, and there was an upsurge of industry as transportation improved. The rapid expansion of the railways coupled with the earlier opening of the Suez Canal brought new opportunities for world trade.

The cotton industry in Bombay was substantially in Parsi hands; the jute industry in Scottish hands. The tea industry too was in British hands; there again the Scottish firm, James Finlay, controlling large tea estates. Till World War II cotton, jute and tea were India's main exports.

Everything looked tranquil till some Bengal revolutionaries and Tilak came on the scene soon after Jamsetji's death in 1904. A new professional middle class was emerging. Nurtured on the intellectual diet of the speeches of Edmund Burke in college they were not ready to accept foreign rule so easily.

Protestant missionaries started the Wilson College and Jesuits the St Xavier's in Bombay. After that more private colleges sprung up. By the end of the nineteenth century two more universities had come up—Lahore (1882) and Allahabad (1887), and a total of 176 colleges. Though there were four colleges each for medicine and engineering, none had attained the front rank at the time. It was the Indian scientific pioneers and other leaders who provided critical inputs with a national spirit to promote scientific education as well as an innovative climate. Among them were M.L. Sircar, who established the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (1876) at Calcutta, where C.V. Raman did his research. While M.L. Sircar enlisted the cooperation of some industrialists and others for financial support, J.N. Tata *individually* offered his benefaction to establish an institution that had a far greater canvas.

The last decade of Jamsetji's life, from 1894 to 1904, was to synchronize with the tenures of Lord Elgin and Lord Curzon as viceroy.

In 1894 when Lord Elgin landed in India, 'within its frontiers there had been a prolonged period of unbroken peace. The Indian people were more docile than ever and they were certainly outwardly tranquil . . . Few foresaw the time was fast approaching when the entire country would be disturbed by strife and unrest,' notes Lovat Fraser.

In 1896 there was a famine. In 1898 the bubonic plague took an enormous toll of lives in Bombay. Jamsetji not only had a wide view of the future, he also lived fully into his own times. When the plague broke out he did everything he could to study the subject. He encouraged a Russian doctor, Haffkine, who was trying to discover a plague vaccine.

On 30 December 1898, George Nathaniel Curzon landed in Bombay to take over as the viceroy of India. At Eton he had carried away prizes for English prose and verse, Italian, French and Latin. The brilliance continued at Balliol College, Oxford. He was president of the Oxford Union. Oxford undergraduates wrote of him:

I am a most superior person,

My name is George Nathaniel Curzon.

For many years the dream of his life was to govern India. When he visited India at the age of twenty-six he could have stayed at the Viceregal Lodge. Instead he chose to stay at the Great Eastern Hotel. 'Next time I come here,' he said, 'it will be as viceroy.'

And he did.

Young Curzon performed well in the House of Commons. At twenty-one he was known as 'The Coming Man'. At thirty-six he became under-secretary of state for foreign affairs. At thirty-nine viceroy of India. His diction was ceremonious and pompous and he carried an effortless air of superiority.

Winston Churchill wrote an essay on him in his book *Great Contemporaries.* As a young subaltern, he dined with him often at the Viceregal Lodge in Calcutta and he recalled that in private he could be a gay companion, 'adorning every subject he touched with an agile wit', ever ready to laugh at himself. He was a study in contrasts. He could also give scathing rebukes to his subordinates. Subsequent to Jamsetji's offer for a research university he summoned an Education Conference in Simla at which Jamsetji was invited. When the seniormost education officer, Mr Giles, started rather pompously, 'Your Excellency, as the result of forty years' experience of Indian education'—he got no further, the viceroy interjected: 'Sir, it is your forty years experience we are here to correct.'†

Suffering from curvature of the spine he wore a steel brace on his back. The back gave him much pain; still he would sit up and write letters 100 pages long to his wife in England. She had shown one to Churchill. The steel corset made him acquire an 'unbending rigidity of figure which seemed, as time went on, to communicate itself to the very processes of his mind'. In 1904 he was re-appointed viceroy but he didn't stay for long.

He launched Sir Francis Younghusband on a mission to Lhasa that opened up Tibet and ensured British power extended as far as possible into Afghanistan. It is he who created the North-West Frontier Province. He created the Imperial Library and built the Victoria Memorial at the seat of his power, Calcutta.

He had apprehensions of the growing power of imperial Russia that was absorbing provinces of Persia into her czardom. He staged a display of British naval power in the Persian Gulf. From Aden to Burma the area came under the viceroy of India and Indian currency circulated in the Gulf area. The viceroy and governor-general of India was recognized as next only to the prime minister of Britain in the powers he wielded.

Somewhat intoxicated with his power, without consulting Indian opinion, he launched into the partition of Bengal which then stretched from Patna to Chittagong. That roused emotions not only in Bengal but all over India. And the political class woke up. A hothead fired at the governor of Bengal. Curzon had lit a fuse.

Only in 1911 when King George V visited India and the Delhi Durbar was held was Curzon's partition reversed. The two Bengals, East and West were reunited, while Bihar, Orissa and Assam were given a separate status.

He quarrelled with his No.2, Lord Kitchener, commander-in-chief of India, on the issue of the commander-in-chief's powers. Kitchener, military member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, had powerful allies in England and outmanoeuvred him. Curzon offered to resign. To his surprise and chagrin, the resignation was accepted.

Curzon left India in November 1905, resigning before his time but not before he took some giant steps in education, increasing railways from 22,000 to 26,000 miles and starting agricultural schools. He worked at improving the breed of Indian cattle. He started the Pusa Institute for Agricultural Research and the Archaelogical Society of India to which we owe the preservation of the Taj Mahal, whose courtyard was already overgrown with weeds! All agreed about his 'abounding energy, and untiring industry' but a contemporary added: 'Whether he always displayed unerring judgement in the choice of his instrument of policy is, to some extent, an open question.'‡

Curzon left India a sad and lonely man. However, he bounced back to become foreign secretary and almost became what he most aspired to be—the prime minister of Britain.

Jamsetji had to press forward his great schemes during the rule of Curzon. Except for the Taj hotel, for all his three grand schemes for India he needed Curzon's cooperation before proceeding further. It was not an easy task.

When Jamsetji met Curzon in 1898 with a delegation led by Justice Candy he let Justice Candy, vice-chancellor of Bombay University and an ardent exponent of the scheme for the University of Research, present the scheme to the viceroy. Jamsetji kept silent himself.

Curzon coolly questioned, 'But where are the students qualified enough to enter such a university?'

And a further rider: 'And if they pass out where are the employment opportunities?'

When the delegation came out, all were crestfallen except Jamsetji. The viceroy was new to India, he said. He was not disturbed.

Norman Redford, the young Englishman who was Jamsetji's friend, recalls that if someone criticized another person, Jamsetji would often say: 'Well, well, there must be some good in him, somewhere.'

With Curzon Jamsetji had to work hard to discover that 'good in him, somewhere'. He kept his channels open with the secretary of

state for India as he could not always depend on Curzon. But there was never evidence of bitterness towards the viceroy.

# 15

# An Idea Takes Shape

### Indian Institute of Science—I

*No idea more potent for good to the whole nation has seen the light of day in modern times.*

—Swami Vivekananda's paper, *Prabuddha Bharata,* April 1899.

Jamsetji's achievements would have been significant in any era but when seen against the backdrop of where the world was in his time—and more so the conditions in his country—they appear staggering.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the advent of steam and oil as the great propelling forces giving man speed and power the like of which never existed. Along with it came the mass production of steel that was the mother of modern industry. It also witnessed the growth of philanthropic institutions, especially in the USA, and vast benefactions which established centres of advanced learning through large grants of land to 'land universities'—universities which could exist on the income from land. Men like Johns Hopkins left $350,000 for the famous university at Baltimore and Andrew Carnegie, a contemporary of Jamsetji, established 2000 libraries in North America and his native Scotland at a time when books were difficult to obtain.

In its own way India too had its transformation. One of India's most distinguished historians, R.C. Mazumdar, writes: 'The nineteenth century was the great dividing line, and these 100 years changed the face of India far more than did the preceding thousand years.'*

There was a run up to the vision of Jamsetji Tata for an advanced university.

In 1851 the first telegraph lines were laid from Alipore to Rajghat in Calcutta and they were extended two years later. Jamsetji was thinking of the training required to maintain, expand and operate these lines.

The three universities established in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras

in 1857 were mainly examining bodies. Postgraduate learning was sanctioned under the Indian Universities Act eight years after Jamsetji proposed a postgraduate university. He was way ahead of his time and it took decades before others caught up with the advanced level of science and technology he proposed.

When Jamsetji proposed his university there were only four medical and four engineering colleges though scores of other colleges of arts and science.

The Geological Survey of India was established in 1851 and the height of seventy Himalayan peaks measured.

The Indian Meteorological Department was set up in 1875.

In 1876 the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science was founded in Calcutta where fifty years later C.V. Raman did his Nobel Prize winning work on light scattering. (Incidentally, he was to be the first Indian director of the Indian Institute of Science.)

The Imperial Bacteriological Laboratory was set up in Pune in 1890 and, as said earlier, Jamsetji supported a Russian doctor, Haffkine, with his Plague Research Laboratory in Bombay later in the decade.

Jamsetji's grant concept was not planned in the abstract but based on observation of the trend of his age in India and abroad. No doubt the man also was recognized as one of the most travelled Indians of his lifetime. Kim Sebaly, of Kent University, USA, estimates that between the ages of 20 and 65, when he died, he was abroad for fifteen years—one out of three! He never missed an international industrial exhibition. He observed acutely and studied intensely whatever interested him.

Jamsetji's comprehensive mind wove a tapestry on so wide a scale that it was hard for his contemporaries to grasp it. He not only wanted research in the sciences and technology—chemical, electrical, sanitary and medical—but also in philosophy and education to give training to his people. That he happened to be one of the richest men of India—outside the circle of a few princes—and that he offered a fortune added credence to his project.

He never projected himself but got others inspired to promote his projects. He played the role of a catalyst as well as the spearhead.

In 1889 Lord Reay, as chancellor of Bombay University, gave the convocation address that provided the entry point for Jamsetji.

Lord Reay lamented the woeful role of the Indian universities as well as their dismal state of affairs. He pleaded for a meaningful scheme for a teaching university which would attract efficient teachers from the West, and exhorted: 'It is only by the combined

efforts of the wisest men in England, of the wisest men in India, that we can hope to establish in this old home learning, real universities which will give a fresh impulse to learning, to research, to criticism, which will inspire reverence and impart strength and self-reliance to future generations of our and your countrymen.'

Even before he wrote to Lord Reay in 1896, he had done his homework. Two years earlier he persuaded a young professor, Burjorji Padshah, whose guardian he was, to give up plans to join the Servants of India Society and to do something much bigger for India. He shared his vision with the young idealist and Padshah was sparked.

Years later Padshah recalled: 'Tata's interest in education for scientific research was fuelled during his frequent visits abroad, the flames which ignited them were indigenous. The shortcomings of India's universities, which examined but did not teach, had been noted almost from their inception.'

Jamsetji suggested Padshah go to the main universities in Europe and America and suggest a model for India. After eighteen months of travel he came back and proposed Johns Hopkins of Baltimore as suitable for India.

Armed with Padshah's detailed survey, clear about his intent to back up such a university, he wrote to Lord Reay on 27 November 1896 with the moving lines quoted earlier, that being 'blessed by mercy of providence with more than a fair share of this world's good . . . I have felt it incumbent on myself to provide a continuous atmosphere of such circumstances for my less fortunate countrymen'.

Then he went on to spell out his concept of a university that could enable it to happen. Regarding finance he said: 'No single man's resources in India can cope with all these wants, though individuals may do much. No individual has therefore a right to attach conditions to his gifts, which might impede other benefactors. I am convinced that if a firm lead is given such benefactors will stream in upon the new or reorganised University . . . I propose to give such a lead by making a Trust Settlement of property annually yielding between Rupees Eighty Thousand and a lac for this purpose, subject however to certain stipulations. I want no titles for myself, nor do I wish my name attached to anything. The national movement ought to bear a national name, and every separate benefactor might be at ease, as far as I am concerned, that his endowment won't bear a name subsidiary to any.'

He went on: 'It is not in this manner alone that I propose to provide for growing wants of the proposed University or Institution. I have executed a Trust Settlement in favour of my two sons and their

descendants . . . and I wish to combine this Settlement with the one I propose for the contemplated University. I want to do this with a double object in view. First, I believe that property Trusts are very difficult to manage and liable to abuse when managed by bailiffs under large body of Trustees as there necessarily would be for a University. Now if the endowment is to be joined with my family Trust, my descendants will become a sort of hereditary managers with liabilities to the Governing Body of the University. A proportion of the whole net income then, can annually go towards the funds for the maintenance of the University, and a certain proportion each to my descendants, the beneficiaries under the Trust . . . The proposed arrangement will be to have one large Settlement, as it were on joint account between the University and myself and my descendants . . . I am also going to stipulate that if the future growth of income go over a certain limit a far larger portion of the increment should go to the funds of the University and proportionately less to my descendants. In addition to the above sums, I am leaving by my Will, a third of my residuary estates to the University scheme whatever they may amount to at my death.'

He thought that the safest investment was in urban property which was bound to appreciate in time to come. He proposed to the university a joint benefaction with the trust settlement he had made for his two sons. It was later he spelt out that he had kept aside his properties in Bombay for the university. At the start he had in mind Bombay as the site for it. It could be independent or affiliated to one of the old universities, preferably to Bombay University.

In October 1898, Jamsetji announced his scheme publicly offering properties worth Rs. 30 lakh to yield Rs. 2,50,000 per year, the charge on the total income to the university of Rs. 1,25,000 and in case of increment in income two-thirds to go to the university and one-third to his sons.

Jamsetji's sense of purpose predominated, not his ego. He formed a provisional committee of distinguished citizens of Bombay. The representation presented to the viceroy was signed by Edward T. Candy (vice-chancellor, Bombay University); M.G. Ranade (judge, Bombay High Court); T.J. Bennett, (editor of the *Times of India*); Reverend D. Mackichan (principal, Wilson College, University of Bombay), B. Krishna (president, Bombay Municipal Corporation), Tata and Padshah. In spite of being the father of the scheme and its financier, he signed his name sixth on the list.

The proposal envisaged a focus on postgraduate studies and to

incorporate different features of German ‘seminars’, French ‘conferences’ and English and American research classes. Three schools—Sanitary Science and Practice, Philosophy and Education—would be opened as funds became available.

Curzon acknowledged Tata’s ‘great generosity and public spirit’ but expressed several reservations about the proposal. Though he confessed that he ‘could lay claim to no special knowledge of the subject’, he wondered whether there would be enough students to warrant hiring highly paid professors in the proposed department, or that at the end of their studies students would find acceptable employment opportunities. He also warned that it might be ‘misunderstood’ if the government were to press any native princes to support the project. Finally, he questioned the wisdom of establishing a department of philosophy and education.

If Curzon was unfamiliar with the state of higher education in India and the rationale for the Tata scheme, the Tata committee was prepared to brief him. Justice Candy assured Curzon that the scheme would be implemented in stages as funds became available. He reported that none of the committee members saw any lack of employment opportunities for graduates of the institution. He also reassured Curzon that it was the Provisional Committee that would make direct appeals to the native princes for financial support, but pointed out that the task would be easier if the government expressed its support for the scheme.

The philosophy and education department, Curzon was advised, had been included to ‘give the institution the character of a university’. Thomas J. Bennett argued that the preparation of teachers for secondary and higher education was critical for learning the art of teaching, and that ethics and psychology were integral to such a course. As private endowments for chairs in Indian history, archaeology and comparative philosophy would be obtained, it would be unnecessary to draw on the general funds of the institution to establish them.

The university combined with his family settlement was questioned by Curzon later. Curzon’s government wrote to Jamsetji to say on 27 July 1899 that they would not countenance the linkage. Promptly, on 11 August, Jamsetji replied that he would not let the family settlement ‘stand in the way of the speedy accomplishment of my purpose’. Jamsetji’s purpose in wanting a family trust was to associate his family who would take an active interest in its fulfilment and well-being. The viceroy’s advisers interpreted it as Jamsetji’s way of

obtaining a baronetcy. This point is developed further in Appendix IV which also mentions two offers of baronetcy to Jamsetji.

Curzon was appreciative of the letter for which he was 'hardly prepared'. He summoned a conference at Simla to discuss this scheme with educationists.

The public response was encouraging. In 1899 the Indian National Congress paid a special tribute to Jamsetji. It took the form of a resolution commending the 'patriotic and munificent support' he had given to scientific education and research in the country. Jamsetji was a member of the Congress from its formulation to his dying day and a steady financial supporter. When the proposal and benefaction were made public there was appreciation all round. 'The announcement of his generosity called forth a chorus of praise. "Mother Bharati," said a prominent Brahmin, "has long been crying for a man among her children, and in Mr Tata she has found the son of her heart." Though a few Indians had, from time to time, given of their wealth towards the advancement of education, the Press contrasted the useless memorials which have been built, or the waterless wells which had been sunk, with Mr Tata's more practical charity. Nothing so sensible on such a princely scale had hitherto been done in India. A gift, worth 200,000 pounds sterling, for educational purposes would have been remarkable in any country; in India it seemed a fabulous sum,' recounted F.R. Harris.

It was a time of communal charity. The only discordant note was struck by a few Parsis who bemoaned that the community's wealth was being diverted to a cause that would benefit others too. In an interview to the *West Coast Spectator*† Jamsetji spelt out his ideas on philanthropy:

> There is one kind of charity common enough among us, and which is certainly a good thing, though I do not think it is the best thing we can have. It is that patchwork philanthropy which clothes the ragged, feeds the poor, and heals the sick and halt. I am far from decrying the noble spirit which seeks to help a poor or suffering fellow-being. But charities of the hospital and poor asylum kind are comparatively more common and fashionable among us Parsees.
>
> What advances a nation or community is not so much to prop up its weakest and most helpless members, as to lift up the best and most gifted so as to make them of the greatest service to the country. I prefer this constructive philanthropy which seeks to educate and develop the faculties of the best of our young men. And if this is to be done, what I ask my fellow-Parsees is: 'What difference is it to them whether it is exclusively to their benefit or open to all?' If able professors and specialists are to be obtained, the cost will be the same, whether it is only a few Parsees alone

that attend their lectures, or young men of all communities. The Parsees cannot supply more than a very few students for each post-graduate class, and it would be foolish to have costly professors to lecture to only two or three Parsees to the exclusion of hundreds who are anxious to benefit likewise.

Meanwhile on 23 November 1898, Jamseti wrote a letter to Swami Vivekananda:

Dear Swami Vivekanand,

I trust that you remember me as fellow traveller on your voyage from Japan to Chicago. I very much recall at this moment your views on the growth of the ascetic spirit in India and duty, not destroying, but of diverting it into useful channels.

I recall these ideas in connection with my scheme of a Research Institute for India, of which you have doubtless heard or read. It seems to me that no better use can be made of the ascetic spirit than the establishment of monasteries or residential halls for men dominated by this spirit, where they should live with ordinary decency and devote their lives to the cultivation of sciences - natural and humanistic. I am of opinion that if such a crusade in favour of an asceticism of this kind were undertaken by a competent leader, it would greatly help asceticism, science and the good name of our common country, and I know not who would make a more fitting general of such a campaign than Vivekanand.

Do you think you would care to apply yourself to the mission of galvanising into life our ancient traditions in this respect? Perhaps, you better begin a fiery pamphlet rousing our people in this matter?

I should cheerfully defray all the expenses of publications.

With Kind Regards,

I am dear Swami

Yours faithfully,

J.N. Tata

The background to his letter is that in 1893 Jamsetji was on his way for the industrial exposition to Chicago. In Japan he was staying at the same hotel where a few days later Swami Vivekananda checked in. Jamsetji was to recall later that in Japan some observed that Vivekananda resembled the Buddha. They overlapped for about a week and thereafter both sailed from Yokohama to the West Coast of America on S.S. *Empress of India.* Swami Vivekananda was to attend the Parliament of Religions which was one of the side elements of the industrial exposition. On board ship they had the leisure to exchange views. It is reported that the monk told the merchant prince that instead of importing matches from Japan he should manufacture them

in India. Their manufacture could give a livelihood to the rural people. Jamsetji also appears to have had his own impact on the Swamiji, then just thirty.

Volume III of *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda,* published in 1973, includes a report from the *Salem Evening News* of 29 August 1893 which shows the influence each had on the other. The news item reports the speech of Swami Vivekananda:

> In other districts (in India) the men eat rice only, the women and children must satisfy their hunger with the water in which the rice is cooked. A failure of the rice crop means famine. Half the people live upon one meal a day, the other half know not whence the next meal will come. According to Swami Veve Kyonda [Vivekananda] the need of the people of India is not more religion, or a better one, but as he expresses it, 'practicality'. It is with the hope of interesting the American people in this great need of the suffering, starving millions that he has come to this country.
>
> He said the missionaries had fine theories there and started with good ideas, but had done nothing for the industrial condition of the people. He said Americans, instead of sending out missionaries to train them in religion, would better send someone out to give them industrial education.‡

A report, also published in the same volume, on the same issue, from the *Daily Gazette* of 29 August 1893 says:

> The speaker explained his mission in his country to be to organise monks for industrial purposes, that they might give the people the benefit of this industrial education and thus to elevate them and improve their condition.§
>
> The poverty of the majority of the masses was strongly dwelt upon. India with an area much smaller than the United States . . . three hundred millions earn wages, averaging less than fifty cents per month. In some instance the people in whole districts of the country subsist for months and even years wholly upon flowers produced by a certain tree which when boiled are edible.

There is no record available today of the Swami's acknowledgement of Jamsetji's letter. There is available, however, the text of an article in *Prabuddha Bharata,* a monthly magazine started by Swami Vivekananda. The text in the issue of April 1899 reads:

> **Mr Tata's Scheme:**
>
> We are not aware if any project at once so opportune and so far-reaching in its beneficent effects was ever mooted in India, as that of the post-graduate research University of Mr. Tata. The scheme grasps the vital point of weakness in our national well-being with a clearness of vision and tightness of grip, the masterliness of which is only equalled by the

> munificence of the gift with which it is ushered to the public . . .
>
> If India is to live and prosper and if there is to be an Indian nation which will have its place in the ranks of the great nations of the world, the food question must be solved first of all. And in these days of keen competition it can only be solved by letting the light of Modern Science penetrate every pore of the two giant feeders of mankind—Agriculture and Commerce.
>
> The ancient methods of doing things can no longer hold their own against the daily multiplying cunning devices of the modern man. He that will not exercise his brain, to get out the most from Nature, by the least possible expenditure of energy must go to the wall, degenerate and reach extinction. There is no escape.
>
> Mr Tata's scheme paves the path placing into the hands of Indians this knowledge of Nature—the preserver and the destroyer, the ideal good servant as well as the ideal bad master—that by having the knowledge, they might have power over her and be successful in the struggle for existence.
>
> By some the scheme is regarded as chimerical, because of the immense amount of money required for it, about 74 lacs. The best reply to his fear is: If one man—and he not the richest in the land—could find 30 lacs, could not the whole country find the rest? It is ridiculous to think otherwise, when the interest sought to be served is of the paramount importance.
>
> We repeat: No idea more potent for good to the whole nation has seen the light of day in modern India. Let the whole nation therefore, forgetful of class or sect interests, join in making it a success.

Sister Nivedita, a disciple of Vivekananda, remained an ardent supporter and campaigner for the scheme for years to come. In a well-researched paper on 'Vivekananda, Nivedita and Tata's Research Scheme' Sankari Prasad Basu notes that a friend of the Swamiji from America wrote of her meeting Mr Tata and suggested they meet each other. The Swamiji wrote: 'I will, of course, accept an invitation if I am strong enough to go to Bombay.' But fate willed otherwise. The Swamiji passed away in 1902. In 1904 when Jamsetji passed away the *Prabuddha Bharata* wrote: 'The makings of a prosperous nation depends on qualities of the head and heart like those possessed by Mr Tata. A few more Tatas could change the face of India.'

For the three chapters on the Indian Institute of Science the author is indebted to Dr B.V. Subbarayappa's well researched history of the insititute, *In Pursuit of Excellence.* Dr Subbarayappa was president of the International Union of History and Philosophy of Science (1997-2001).

# 16

# The Struggle

### Indian Institute of Science—II

*Duty measures its giving: Love gives with prodigality*

—William E. Sangster

*I give the rest residue and remainder of my property of what kind and nature soever and wheresoever as to one equal third part thereof to my said son Dorab Jamsetjee Tata absolutely and as to another equal third part thereof to my said son Ruttonji Jamsetji Tata absolutely and as to the remaining third part thereof in trust for the said University scheme.*

—From the Will of Jamsetji Tata, 16 December 1896

Once the committee presented the case to the viceroy, within days, in January 1899, they distributed hundreds of copies of the provisional scheme to educational experts throughout India for comment and criticism. The replies of seventy-six respondents, including the principals of university colleges, school inspectors and headmasters, were abstracted by Padshah and categorized by Justice Ranade. Though often critical, the respondents gave support to the Provisional Committee's assertion that there was great need for such an institution in India, and that in time, all aspects of the plan might be implemented.

Alongside the negotiations with the government, the details of the financial and educational aspects were being worked out.

The annual expenditure was placed at 20,000 pounds sterling and the capital expenditure at 90,000 pounds sterling. Jamsetji's major endowment was the cornerstone with 8000 pounds sterling assured income from his properties. Jamsetji was expecting Indian princes—especially those of enlightened states like Baroda (to support the agriculture side), Mysore (known for its gold and mineral resources) and Travancore with its interest in plantations of tea, coffee and cincona— would assist as well.

Of these only Mysore came forward with a munificent firm offer. It

originated from the personal friendship of Jamsetji with H. J. Bhabha, inspector-general of education for Mysore and Coorg.

Jamsetji was charmed also by Mr Bhabha's 18-year-old daughter, Meherbai, or Mehri as she was generally called. He felt she would be a good match for his elder son, who was nearing forty. He was wise enough not to make it obvious to his son but advised him to meet Mr Bhabha's family for a cup of tea when he went to Bangalore. When Dorab visited, the tea was served by Mehri and sure enough Dorab fell under her spell and they were soon married. This was related to the author by Jamshed J. Bhabha, the nephew of Lady Meherbai Tata.

Through H.J. Bhabha, Jamsetji and Sir Seshadri Iyer, the enlightened dewan of Mysore state, became good friends. Jamsetji discussed with the dewan his predicament about the location of the new institution and the financial support. Seshadri Iyer could envisage the potentialities of such an institution and rose to the occasion. He persuaded the dowager maharani (her son was a minor) and committed in principle the government of Mysore to the offer of free land and some financial support for Jamsetji's university proposal. The Mysore government soon made known its generous intent to the Provisional Committee; the details of the offer, however, were yet to be conveyed.

When the announcement came, Mysore offered 375 acres of its palace grounds, Rs. 50,000 per annum and Rs. 5 lakh for capital expenditure.

After the Mysore offer, a Bombay businessman, Chabildas Lalloobhoy of Macintosh & Co., made a similar offer.

He offered a plot of 300 acres at Dindosie, Malad, in Salsette taluka or, alternatively, at Magathan near Kennery caves. He also offered to supply material to construct the building for the institute valued at Rs. 5 to 7 lakh.

Chabildas was one of the largest landowners in the Presidency having 18,000 acres of land in Thana district.

The *Bombay Gazette* of 13 March 1900 commented on this news as follows:

> . . . there is a strong feeling in Bombay that it (institute) should be located as near the city as possible and the generous offer of Mr Chabildas renders that eventuality exceedingly possible.

However, two committees to look into the details of the institute were formed in the years to come and the final place selected was Bangalore.

The next step was to get an expert to give a report on the scheme formulated to finalize the site and the financial arrangements required for it.

In consultation with the Royal Society in England Dr William Ramsay (the inventor of neon; he was later knighted and became a Nobel Prize winner) was invited by Jamsetji with his wife to tour India and report. Ramsay was overwhelmed by the hospitality he got.

They were first directed to Bangalore, Madras and Roorkee, the other possible locations. Ramsay preferred Bangalore. It was 3000 ft. above sea level and the climate was equable. Curzon was not keen on it.

Ramsay also visited the Elphinstone, St Xavier's and Grant Medical Colleges in Bombay, but found the teaching even at B.Sc. level not up to London standards.

Before the Ramsays left Bombay for their India tour the Tatas arranged for them a 'water picnic' at Elephanta Caves. Jamsetji, Dorab and Mehri and a couple of friends were in a launch, 'towing behind it a dhow, or something very piratical looking', as Mrs Ramsay wrote to a friend, that was 'full of wild-looking persons, whose duties were however no more alarming than to make ices for us to eat on the voyage, and tea on arrival at the island. Returning to Bombay we drove to old Mr Tata's house to dress and dine there. It is a gorgeous palace, and deserves a letter to itself. It is more like a Berlin hotel than any other place that I have seen. The dining-room had a horse-shoe table, the servants coming up from below and serving from the middle. The table, as we sat on the outside of the horseshoe, could seat thirty to forty people, and we were only a party of twelve. The food was rather rich; but, I fancy, arranged to meet our tastes. There were no table decorations at all. After dinner we went over the house . . .' Mrs Ramsay mentions a central winter garden, full of statues and other objects of art.

The Tatas found a good Goan cook for the Ramsays' journey through India. When Mrs Ramsay was unwell he insisted she ate only the food he cooked and threw out everything else. In accordance with the custom, when guests went to dinner their servant accompanied them. A fellow guest at a dinner where the Ramsays were invited said to Mrs Ramsay: 'Does this man (the Goan cook) starve you? I notice when you help yourself to anything he takes your plate away!'

In Bangalore Dr Ramsay met Sir Seshadri Iyer and, of course, H.J. Bhabha, who looked after them.

After Agra they visited Roorkee and from there went to meet the

lieutenant-governor of Punjab, who was camping in a native state across the Sutlej. Lady Ramsay described the occasion. A railway journey brought them within the limits of a native state which they were visiting, but which no lieutenant-governor had visited for twenty-five years. The raja had been asked to arrange for the conveyance of the visitors to the river, and across it. To do this a road had been made for about eleven miles, and laid with rushes to keep down the dust.

Along this road the Ramsays were driven in a state carriage, drawn by four mules, objects of much interest to the inhabitants of the villages along the route, who had watched the road being made, and were curious as to its object. From the carriage the travellers were carried in *palkis* on board the boat in which they crossed the river. On the other side they were received by some of the lieutenant-governor's staff and escorted to camp. The official camp, where everything was in duplicate, so that camp could be moved without delay or inconvenience, was a village in itself, providing accommodation for the lieutenant-governor with a great reception tent, and quarters for staff and visitors and offices. The visitors' quarters included bed and sitting rooms, and were fully furnished, though the furniture was light and portable. 'About seven hundred camels were required to move the camp from site to site.' Two nights were spent in the camp. Ramsay had a morning's duck shooting. It was the Ramsays' first real experience of how the Raj was run.

A brief visit to Baroda, Bombay and soon on board for home. It was a ten-week visit, too short for Ramsay in a country of India's size. He said it was 'like reading the index of a book without reading the book itself'. On the ship he wrote his report. The memories and friendships formed in India coloured all his life.

Ramsay recommended Bangalore as the location and either a matching contribution of 8000 pounds sterling from the government or at least 5000 pounds sterling per year.

Curzon rejected the recommendations. He was not too keen on Bangalore but may have relented with the land offer. It was the size of the scheme and the government contribution he would not accept. Later he was willing to go up to 2000 pounds sterling a year. So he appointed his own committee consisting of the principal of Roorkee College of Engineering, Col. Clibborn, and Prof. Arme Masson from Australia. Their mandate was to plan for an institute of study and research in a limited number of pure and applied sciences. The committee gave their plan and suggested Roorkee as the location. As

Jamsetji did not want his name to be associated with the university they suggested a suitable memorial to him in the central building. Jamsetji's munificence and vision touched them. It is they who gave the name finally chosen: the Indian Institute of Science.

In 1901, Jamsetji saw the secretary of state for India, Lord Hamilton. Jamsetji had warned Curzon before he left for England that he would again raise the matter of the package deal of a family settlement with the university personally with the secretary of state. And he did. Hamilton agreed to consider Jamsetji's request. Curzon was furious. Curzon dug his heels in and refused to give Jamsetji's scheme more than 2000 pounds sterling a year. He privately wrote to Hamilton that if Jamsetji did not accept this offer 'the onus for the failure of the scheme' would not fall on the British.

Curzon wrote to Hamilton on 26 June 1901: 'We are endeavouring to save Tata's scheme from ship-wreck which his ambitions and Ramsay's exaggerated ideas threatened it [sic].'

Curzon was in no hurry. Lord Hamilton wrote to Curzon that he thought that Jamsetji would now put his money into 'his iron or hydro-electric projects', which Jamsetji had also discussed with him. But Jamsetji was not so easily deflected. On 20 January 1904, he wrote a codicil to his will but he did not withdraw his benefaction for the institute to be.

In an earlier codicil of 16 February 1900 he made it clear:

> Now I hereby Will and direct that if the said University is brought to the point of realisation after my life-time and I have died without carrying out my said undertaking then and in such case my executors shall, out of my general estate, provide sufficient property or funds for the purpose of fulfilling my said undertaking and I also will and declare that if the Government of India prior to or in view of the necessary legislation and sanction by the Secretary of State for India or otherwise require an undertaking to provide such property or funds as aforesaid when the University is about to be incorporated, then and in such case, my Executors shall give such undertaking so as to bind my estate to carry it out.*

In May 1904 Jamsetji died at Bad Nauheim, Germany, still in doubt whether his beloved scheme would ever come off. In order to secure the future finances of the university, Jamsetji had earlier requested his partners and colleagues that in future a part of the commission earned be diverted to the university. But his partners declined and it hurt him that they did.

Every agent of a mill took a commission of 10 per cent of the

turnover. Jamsetji had refused it. In 1900 he felt that to augment the resources of the university his successful Empress Mills could charge a commission of 5 per cent to add to the annual income of his generous endowment. Neither his circle of friends nor his partners at Empress Mills agreed, much to his disappointment. He wrote to Bezonji Dadabhai Mehta on 2 May 1900, from England:

> You say that I had better drop the scheme (of charging commission) till the University scheme has gained greater strength. You say my friends will be glad if I do that; for no one who has come to know of it seems to like it . . . Now what reason do the friends you speak of assign for the opinions they hold? I must confess that I am almost, if not quite, singular in all India in not charging any commission. But that is my personal business if I choose to do so. Nobody can say that the University scheme is not a grand and noble one, and the benefits to be derived from it infinitely great. Then why should honest people grudge me the right to claim what I believe is due to me, and make it over for such a noble cause? I can't see how even an ignorant man, except he be malicious, can misunderstand my motives.

Eventually, Jamsetji allowed himself to be prevailed upon to give in to his friends' remonstrances, and he wrote to Bezonji on 19 June 1900, that 'as far as reason and argument are concerned, I cannot afford to ignore my friends' remonstrances, but when they come to impressions and sentiments, I do not see why my impressions and sentiments should give way to theirs.'

As noted earlier, a section of the Parsi press had attacked Jamsetji for giving away the wealth of the community to a project from which Parsis would benefit only marginally. The viceroy was cold. His partners not keen to go the extra mile though he was the founder of Empress Mills. Any lesser man than Jamsetji would have withdrawn the gift. But he did not.

He had faith that some day his university scheme would fructify. He did not divest his resources for the institute in favour of his 'Iron and Hydro-Electricity Schemes' as Hamilton had written to Curzon.

Jamsetji died a few months later. The *Times of India's* obituary on 20 May 1904 spoke of his 'quiet, strong, stern determination to pursue his calling'.

# 17

# The Fruition

### Indian Institute of Science—III

*He soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he who soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully.*

—*The Bible* (2: Corinthians 9:6)

The Government of India deeply mourned the sad and untimely demise on 19 May 1904 of 'an eminent philanthropic citizen'. Within two weeks of his death, the government inquired with his sons as to the effect of their father's death on the scheme of founding the institute. Both Ratan Tata (who was in India) and Dorab Tata (who was then in England) assured the government of their readiness to carry out the wishes of their father. Not too long after the funeral, Dorab met Curzon, who was at Bexhill at the time. He told Curzon that if the government failed to offer adequate financial support to the new institute, he and his brother would withdraw the offer and utilize the money for educational purposes in some other manner. Curzon appears to have consented to re-examine the entire scheme on his arrival in India. He did agree, in principle, to provide a grant-in-aid to the extent of half of the amount collected from all other sources both for capital and recurring expenditure, on a continuing basis. That was a concession he was not prepared to make earlier, sticking to his 2000 pounds sterling a year.

Unfortunately, on his return to India, the old prejudice came to the fore again.

In July 1904, Curzon wrote to Dorab Tata:

> Since the scheme is your father's and nobody else's and since its successful accomplishment depends, in the opinion of your Committee, upon the provision of a sum greater than the GOI (Government of India) have ever felt to be necessary, why do not the representatives of the late Mr Tata themselves make up the alleged deficiency instead of perpetually appealing to the GOI and the Mysore Government to come to their rescue?

> There seems to me, as I told you the other day, to have been too much scheming to get the Government into an enterprise which, if the project failed at any time, to carry out the aspirations of its authors, it would be possible to say; 'It is all the fault of the Government.'

Dorab Tata, though taken aback by Curzon's reversal of attitude, tried to place the whole matter in proper perspective. He pointed out that the notion which had gripped Curzon's mind so far that the scheme was his father's, was erroneous since his father never desired to have his name associated with it. He reminded Curzon that his father held that it was an objective which 'should appeal as much to the Government of India as to the people of India at large': his endowment was to be a starting fund or nucleus around which other donations could accumulate for the growth of the institution. Meanwhile, the Indian press was vociferous in favour of the institute; but Padshah's role in this publicity became suspect in the eyes of Curzon, who even told Dorab Tata about the 'disloyal attitude of Padshah' and the 'harm done by the poisonous audacity of the Native Press'. Curzon also doubted the sincerity of the persons involved in the scheme. Dorab, in turn, pointed out that on their side too, the attitude of the Government of India had raised suspicions about its real intention.

This type of mutual suspicion did not last long. The submission of the Lowndes Report on the Bombay properties was a silver lining on the otherwise dark scene. Both Dorab and Ratan Tata expressed their willingness to transfer the endowed properties to the treasurer of charitable endowments. This action was intended not only to avoid any need for special legislation concerning these properties but also to set aside the necessity of incorporating the new institute in the Indian Universities Act of 1904. Curzon's government, more than the Tatas, felt satisfied with this move. The clouds which were hovering over the scheme for quite some time began to disperse one by one.

Ramsay's choice as director was Prof. Morris Travers, a close associate of Ramsay on his discovery of rare gases. Other matters took time to sort out but they were. Curzon left for home in 1905, much before his second term was over, but not before he gave the green light for the project.

Curzon was succeeded by Lord Minto. Sir Dinshaw Wacha writes: 'Not a little of the praise is due to the late Lord Minto, during whose sympathetic and statesman like Viceroyalty this great work came to be accomplished. It may be said that the Tata family owe a last debt of gratitude personally to Lord Minto who was so greatly instrumental in

crowning the edifice of this institute.'*

With the approval of Lord Minto, the Government of India published on 27 May 1909 a Resolution which, apart from its tracing the history leading to the establishment of the institute, contained a scheme of administration and management of the properties and funds of the institute. More important, it expressed the government's policy towards the Indian Institute of Science as follows:

> While sympathizing cordially with the far-reaching ideals of its promoters, the Governor-General in Council has no desire to associate himself intimately with the actual administration of the Institute, or to claim a determining voice in the settlement of the lines of research to be followed and the methods of furthering by all legitimate means the great undertaking which owes its origin to the generous philanthropy of the late Mr Tata and has, since his death been wisely and liberally promoted by his sons . . . The Government of India are anxious in no way to interfere with the free growth of whatever forms of intellectual activity and economic enterprise the Institute may encourage or create, and they will therefore confine themselves strictly to exercising no more than that degree of influence and control which is justified, and indeed rendered obligatory, by the substantial grant-in-aid which they have determined to contribute.

Dr Subbarayappa, in his book *In Pursuit of Excellence,* concludes: 'In retrospect, the terms and trends of the delaying decade proved to be beneficial for the functional freedom of the Indian Institute of Science.'

For the next forty years the institute reigned supreme as the only major institute of its kind, until the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) was set up in 1945.

Dr Homi Bhabha was on vacation in India in September 1939 when World War II broke out. As he was unable to return to England, J.R.D. Tata had the Cosmic Ray Department at the IISc help him complete his work. Till one day he proposed an insititute for fundamental research, which proposal was accepted by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust. The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) would become 'the cradle of India's atomic energy programme' as Homi Bhabha called it. This was four months before the world woke up to the power of atomic energy after Hiroshima. In the 1950s and '60s, of course, came the IITs.

The Indian Institute of Science was also where Dr Vikram Sarabhai did his initial work. IISc's distinguished director, Dr Satish Dhawan, took up India's space programme concurrently with his position as director of the institute. The institute thereby gave a part of the intellectual framework for ISRO (Indian Space Research

Organization). The outreach of the institute over time in India's scientific progress has been unparalleled. It had a role in the creation of institutes like the Central Food Technology Institute, the Central Lac Research Institute and the National Aeronautical Laboratory, which got a kick start from the Aeronautical Department at the IISc., and the Metallurgical Division of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

The governing council of the IISc accepted the suggestion to have a fitting memorial to Jamsetji. The monument was designed by Gilbert Bayes. One relief contains the figure of Jove with his thunderbolt, typifying electricity, and Vulcan with his anvil, denoting steel. In the other relief, Minerva holds a distaff covered with flax and Calliope, connoting research. A bronze rail has a lamp of learning in its centre, flanked by dolphins indicating the founder's travels. At its summit a bronze statue of Jamsetji stands majestic and serene holding in his hand a tiny replica of the institute's main building. The statue, completed in 1916, could not be shipped from England as World War I was on then and was installed in 1922. The inscription reads:

JAMSETJI NUSSERWANJI TATA
PARSI CITIZEN OF BOMBAY
BORN - MARCH 3, 1839
DIED - MAY 19, 1904
TO HIS FORESIGHT & PATRIOTISM
THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE
BANGALORE OWES ITS ORIGIN
AND TO HIS MUNIFICENCE
A GREAT PART OF ITS ENDOWMENT
AS A DISTINGUISHED
CAPTAIN OF INDUSTRY
AND PATRON OF LEARNING
HE PERCEIVED THE BENEFIT
TO HIS COUNTRY
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH IN
SCIENCE ARTS AND INDUSTRIES
AND FOUNDED THIS INSTITUTE
THE FIRST OF ITS KIND IN INDIA
THIS STATUE
OF ITS FOUNDER

WAS ERECTED IN 1916

BY

THE COUNCIL OF INDIAN

INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

On 3 March each year hundreds of the faculty staff gather to remember the founder. More touching is the sight of scores of individuals who come and fold their hands in homage at the statue. A gentleman called Mr Nagraj who works at the institute's guest house says: 'Every morning at 6.30 I go and pray at the statue.' There are others who give it the same reverence.

*

Meanwhile Curzon, back home, lost his wife from whom he had three daughters. Later he married the daughter of an American millionaire. He returned to public life and became foreign minister to Prime Minister David Lloyd George in 1919, after World War I. Lloyd George and Curzon could not get along but when Andrew Bonar Law became prime minister in 1922 the foreign secretary had better relations with him. In May 1923 Bonar Law resigned due to ill health and Curzon was called to London from his country home. He came with his wife expecting to be summoned by King George V to take over as prime minister. He was deeply shaken to be told that he had had been passed over in favour of Stanley Baldwin, 'ostensibly on the ground that a peer could not be prime minister; in reality because Curzon's pomposity and apparent arrogance were considered handicaps in a democratic age . . .'

He was a broken man. Two years later he fell seriously ill. His second wife in her book writes movingly of Curzon's last days. She says that in his last moments they held each other's hand and said the Lord's prayer: 'Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . .'

And what is the verdict of history on Curzon and Jamsetji Tata? Winston Churchill in his book *Great Contemporaries* wrote on Curzon:

> Equipped with glittering treasures of mind, driven forward by will, courage, tireless industry, he failed to achieve the central purpose of his life. Majestic in speech, appearance and demeanour he never led.

And on Jamsetji, the *Times of India* in its obituary, wrote on 20 May 1904:

His sturdy strength of character prevented him from fawning on any man however great, for he himself was great in his own way, greater than most people realised. He sought no honour and he claimed no privilege. But the advancement of India and her myriad peoples was with him an abiding passion.

# 18

# The Preparation

### Tata Steel—I

Few inventions have advanced the growth of industry as that of the steam engine. James Watt, by finding a way to push a piston back and forth in its cylinder and use this motion to turn a wheel had, in effect, ushered in the modern age. The first iron railway was laid in Shropshire and pulled by horses. A larger load could be hauled. The mining industry in Wales led by an engineer, Richard Trescothick (1771-1833), tried to experiment with steam-engined road vehicles and used one to haul the trucks of coal by road until one engine blew up! Undeterred he attached a steam engine to a 20-tonne load on a railway line. He was warned 'the wheels would slip on the iron rails'. The trial was successful.

Convinced about the future of passenger traffic on rails, he set in motion an engine, 'Catch-me-who can', and ran it on a circular railway at a shilling a ride.

In 1825 the first public railway carried pasengers for forty kilometres by locomotive. By 1845 Britain had 3000 kilometres of railways. The great age of railway building had begun and with it came the exceptional demand for steel.

The need to mass produce steel railway lines was recognized. Steam power also made possible the use of steel in ships.

In 1882 a German geologist, Ritter von Schwartz, wrote a report that the best situated iron ore deposits were in Chanda District, in the Central Provinces, not far from Nagpur. In fact the name of the area was 'Lohara', meaning iron. Warora nearby had coal.

To start with Jamsetji took samples of both—perhaps after personal visits as his Empress Mills was close by—to Germany for testing. The coal was found unsuitable. The mining terms offered by the government were too restrictive. Jamsetji, then forty-three, decided the time was yet to come. For the next seventeen years he kept track

of minerals in India. In 1899 Major Mahon (later general) gave a report that India was now ready for the steel industry. Mahon suggested good quality coal from Jharia coalfields in eastern India and iron ore from Chanda and Salem District, Madras Presidency.

Lord Curzon liberalized the licensing system.

Jamsetji lost no time to make his second foray for steel. After his encounters with Curzon in 1898-99 he felt he would rather go straight to the secretary of state for India in London, Lord George Hamilton. He had by then established his credentials as a senior industrialist of India.

In the summer of 1900 he went to the secretary. Hamilton had the unique distinction of having been undersecretary of state for India for four years and secretary of state for seven years. He encouraged visitors from India to meet him so that he did not have to depend on official reports alone.

Hamilton obviously had his own private report on Jamsetji. To his utter surprise and joy Jamsetji found in him a kindred spirit. Hamilton told Jamsetji to go ahead with his iron and steel project though he was sceptical as to whether the necessary quality of iron ore was available. Jamsetji said he would cable home to send him further information. Hamilton even said that India's industrial development should come from Indian capital.

Encouraged by the secretary's response Jamsetji opened up. He said that he had first thought of the steel project as a young man ambitious to come up in life. Now providence had blessed him with enough and, at sixty plus, he was much older. He told Hamilton that if he now took up a project as big as steel, he would do it for the sake of India.

Hamilton said that Curzon would surely back him on this one. Jamsetji replied: 'Viceroys come and go.' Before he undertook such a major venture he needed assurance. Hamilton said he would authorize the Indian government to give him all possible help. A letter from Jamsetji to Lord Hamilton's private secretary, Richmond Ritchie, reveals the hurdles he ran into even after that, mainly on the issue of longer lease to prospect for minerals. Writing to Ritchie on 17 May 1901—a year after his meeting with the secretary of state—he wrote: 'I related to his Lordship the story of the interminable obstacles placed in my way which, at last, convinced me that there was no serious desire that I should enter this field of enterprise. The Secretary of State, however, encouraged me to hope that if I took the matter in hand again, I should be helped by his Lordship's sympathy and powerful influences; and he even offered to convene a conference of

Iron masters to advise on my plans for Ironworks in the Central Provinces. The General election delayed the idea, and I had to return to India without the benefit of the consultation which would have been very valuable.'

He applied for prospecting licences in Lohara and Peepulgaon areas of Chanda District. He was in uncharted business territory.

He made the mistake of appointing agents to explore the area and their pace was leisurely. Jamestji—who had already burnt his fingers in the shipping business—was cautious of any undue risk. On 1 April 1901 he wrote to the office of the chief commissioner of the Central Provinces that the two-year period of prospecting was too short and he needed four years. Further: 'I take it that Government will let me have the best coal available on payment, but would also like to be assured that Government will provide through their Forest Department on payment all the firewood I may require for converting it into charcoal, the Forest Department undertaking to plant afresh all such trees as may be cut down for the purpose. Or, if Government desire it I am willing to undertake the cutting down and replanting of trees on Government allotting to me certain areas of forests.'

Curzon, meanwhile, was impatient and doubtful of Indians pulling off such a project. So he invited the British industrialist, Sir Ernest Cassels, to consider a steel plant for India. The chief commissioner of the Central Provinces wrote to Lord Curzon on 9 February 1902: 'Prof. Louis has arrived in Jubbulpore on behalf of Sir Ernest Cassels to test the results of the work of the prospector's agents.'

In May 1902 Jamsetji went to London again. At first Hamilton was inaccessible as he was busy with the coronation. Then he went for a vacation in the countryside. Jamsetji pleaded for an appointment if he came down for a Cabinet meeting before he left for America or when Jamsetji returned briefly to England en route to India. He was lucky that Hamilton received him again a few days before he left for India. He had to take up also the university scheme and the new hydro-electric project with him. There is not much by way of record of what transpired in the discussion.

What is amazing is that Jamsetji was initially running the steel project as a one-man show. He kept his son informed, however, and his correspondence with him reveals the extent of preliminary work he did on the project, work of a nature no head of a company would do himself today. Padshah was busy with the institute project, Dorab was in charge of his Bombay projects and Jamsetji was following up on his major projects as he travelled. Only later did he bring in

Padshah for calculation of freight rates of coal and iron ore in the USA and Europe. At sixty-three he was still carrying samples of coal and iron ore. On 1 August 1902, before Hamilton received him, Jamsetji wrote to Bezonji Mehta, the Empress Mills head in India: 'As regards the coking of coal I am having experiments made in Germany and America. I am going to Germany next week, and will see to the matter. In America I have been promised every assistance by Sir Clinton Dawkins, through his firm of Pierpont Morgan in New York. So far the results of the trials are fairly satisfactory.'

On 19 September, five days before he sailed for America, he wrote to Dadabhai Naoroji:

> My dear Dadabhoy,
>
> I have received your letter and regret that owing to pressure of work and correspondence, I have not been able to reply to it ere this.
>
> As regards my scheme of Indian Iron and Steel Industry and the conversations I have had with you on that subject, I am most anxious and willing to utilise Indian capital in connection with my scheme. But you are no doubt aware that capital in India is dear because it is so scarce and that while Indian capitalists would expect at least 6 to 9 p.c. on their capital, European capitalists would be satisfied with 4 to 5 p.c. My scheme, in order to make it a success, must be worked on strictly commercial principles, and it would be unwise on my part, and fatal to my scheme, if I were to borrow the necessary capital in India at a higher rate than that which would be charged if I raised the capital in Europe or America. Moreover, the introduction of such capital would be of great benefit to India itself.

It is worth nothing that he had the details of all three major projects at his fingertips. In America he worked with a strategy—visiting every city or town of consequence that was located in an area rich in coal, iron and limestone deposits. The press learnt of his plans. In Cleveland, the largest iron ore market, a newspaper called him 'a jolly good fellow . . . the J.P. Morgan of the East Indies'. Some long and accurate articles on him were published in Cleveland. At Grand Rapids a local scribe called him 'the richest man in all India'. The *Birmingham News* was more accurate in reporting but insisted on christening him as 'John N. Tata'. While charcoal was the standard smelting agent in America and in a large part of the world till a few decades ago, here was this man from India talking of smelting with electric power—when no city in India was lit by electricity. He said there was abundant water power in India for hydro-electricity.

In some places he also studied the cotton industry, for example in

Georgia state. He travelled rapidly to all the places he needed to see and later used facts he collected with telling effect on the Indian government. He told the government of the concessions offered by American railways for transport of the raw material for the smelting of steel— rates of all complete. He established a small office in New York whose work was mainly to collect data and other tasks assigned by him. He probably travelled with a servant or a cook to help him.

At the same time he was writing lengthy instructions to Dorab in reply to his progress report on finding minerals and queries to his father on licensing and so on.

The visit to the steel towns of America had a salutary effect on him. He needed their technology but when he visited America in 1902 he had been shocked by the condition of the American steel towns. *Fortune* magazine of January 1944 writes that it is then he wrote to Dorab:

> Be sure to lay wide streets planted with shady trees, every other of a quick-growing variety. Be sure that there is plenty of space for lawns and gardens. Reserve large areas for football, hockey and parks.
>
> Earmark areas for Hindu temples, Mohammedan mosques and Christian churches.

In that short paragraph one perceives Jamsetji's concern for the environment, his sense of beauty, his understanding of sport and recreation and above all his vision of an India where all faiths were respected equally and people lived in harmony. Some years after Tata Steel started functioning there was a serious accident in the works when a ladle with 75 tonnes of molten metal crashed on the ground with a deafening sound emitting sparks and burning metal. The confused and frenzied shouts of men were heard above the inimical hiss of steam as red-hot metal hit puddles of water. John Keenan, the general superintendent, could take only three of the injured men in his small car to hospital. He chose one who seemed to have a better chance than the others to survive and told his helpers to bring him. The man shook his head in negation. 'Do not take me away,' he said. Turning his head feebly, the Hindu nodded towards the body of a half-burnt Muslim and spoke: 'Hamara bhai ko le jao' (take my brother), he said clearly. The Hindu who was in pain and in danger of death, remembered not that the Muslim was of a different faith, but that he was his brother.

Jamsetji learnt from his mistakes. He had lost two years in appointing Indian agents to prospect for iron, coal and coke. He

decided he wanted the best technical advice and metallurgical survey the world had to offer.

He spent his last four days of his six-week trip to America in New York. When he sailed for Britain it was only after he had tied up the best talent the world had to offer.*

# 19

# Finding the Right Man and the Right Location

**Tata Steel—II**

'I was poring over some accounts in the office when the I door opened and a stranger in strange garb entered. He walked in, leaned over my desk and looked at me for fully a minute in silence. Finally, he said in a deep voice, "Are you Charles Page Perin?" I said yes.

'He stared at me again silently for a long time. Then slowly he said, "I believe I have found the man I have been looking for. Julian Kennedy [the American steel expert] has written to you and I am going to build a steel plant in India. I want you to come to India with me, to find suitable iron ore and coking coal and the necessary fluxes. I want you to take charge as my consulting engineer. Mr Kennedy will build the steel plant wherever you advise and I will foot the bill. Will you come to India with me?"'

Asked how he dealt with such a sudden proposal, Perin replied, 'I was dumbfounded, naturally. But you don't know what character and force radiated from Tata's face. And kindliness too.'

The interview with Jamsetji was to change the life of Perin and transform the industrial destiny of India. The year was 1902.

Perin, a tall, broad-shouldered man, was a graduate in metallurgy from Harvard. In the winter of 1900-01 he was scouting for coal supplies for the Trans-Siberian Railway—and where else but in Siberia!—at minus 40 degrees Centigrade. He little dreamt that the interview would land him in India, in temperatures in excess of 40 degrees Centigrade! However, to start with he sent his partner, C.M. Weld, a delicate looking but wiry man, to India at great speed. On 17 November 1902 Perin had dinner with Jamsetji in New York. On 17 January Weld was in India. Soon Weld, who, as Verrier Elwin, the pioneer anthropologist, says, 'looked lost in his solar hat' with its wide rims, was with Dorab Tata and Shapurji Saklatvala hunting for raw

materials in Chanda District. The jungle was infested with tigers. They travelled in bullock-carts and made their tea out of soda water. They sent their scouts with samples of iron ore to villages in the area to find out if people there knew of similar reddish black stones in the vicinity.

Weld found the iron ore deposits 'small and pockety'.

'I naturally supposed this would end my job in India and I fully expected to leave for home before the rains. To my surprise, quite the reverse turned out to be the case.

'I soon learned that Mr Tata's plan to manufacture iron and steel was inspired by something far broader and deeper than the mere hope of adding to his fortune by a successful iron works in Chanda. His great cotton mills at Nagpur had become an important industrial school for Indians. He strongly felt the need for further industrial outlets for the Indian people. And he dreamt of a successful iron and steel works as another great industrial school, and another step towards that industrialization of his countrymen which he believed was so necessary for their ultimate national prosperity.

'Therefore, instead of being shipped back to America, I was invited to stay and make an exhaustive study of the possibilities for a commercially successful iron and steel plant in India, regardless of locality. The invitation was too fascinating to be resisted. My whole plan of campaign was thereby altered.'

He continues: 'I laboured on all these problems for a year or more, not leaving India for home until July, 1904. It would make a very long story if I were to tell of all our successive hopes and disappointments, our joys and our tribulations. I travelled many miles by railroad, and many more on horseback through jungle districts with a train of bullock-carts. A part of the time, only elephants would serve for transportation.'

'Jamsetji,' he added, 'was always interested, patient and persistent.'*

The next stage was Dorab Tata waiting at the Nagpur Secretariat to see the commissioner. As the commissioner was not available for some more time, Dorab walked across to the museum across the road. (The museum is still there, in a dilapidated condition.) He was attracted by a geological map printed in colours and noticed that Durg District, near Raipur, was printed dark to indicate large deposits of iron. Further inquiries led Dorab to a fifteen-year-old report by an Indian geologist, P.N. Bose.

The information that the district of the Dhalli-Rajhara hills marked in the Bose report was rich in iron stimulated Weld and Dorabji Tata to go immediately to the spot. As they climbed one of the hills they

were astonished to find that their footsteps rang beneath their feet as though they were walking on metal. This was, of course, just what they were doing, for here was a hill of the finest ore, carrying some 67 per cent of iron - the maximum theoretical yield being 70 per cent.

When Perin later assessed the site, he declared the deposits in these hills to be among the mineral wonders of the world.

But ore alone is not enough. Coking coal and limestone are needed to make steel; there must be a good water supply to cool the furnaces; there must be a convenient market and a means of transport. Every difficulty but the lack of water could have been overcome, but this was decisive. Though Dhalli-Rajhara might supply the ore, the works would have to be located elsewhere.

However, the work of the Tata expedition was not wasted. Fifty years later, the Dhalli-Rajhara deposits were to be utilized for the new steel plant at Bhilai.

Weld now detected a possible site on the Mahanadi River, a few miles west of Sambalpur, near a village called Padampur, where there was limestone and abundant water. There was the further advantage that the site lay almost midway between the Dhalli-Rajhara deposits and the Jharia coalfield. Tents were pitched, the course of the river studied and Weld drew up his plans.

The whole picture was changed by the delivery one morning of a letter to Jamsetji from the same geologist who had sent the prospectors to Durg, P.N. Bose. He was now in the service of Mayurbhanj State.

> Dated: Camp Mourbhanj, the 24th February 1904.
>
> Dear Sir,
>
> As you are interested in the development of the iron industry of this country, I have to bring to your notice an exceedingly rich and extensive deposit of iron ore which I have just explored in this state. The ores consist of magnetite, haematite and limonite. They occur in such abundance that for all practical purpose they may be considered to be inexhaustible, and limestone of good quality occurs close to them.
>
> Almost touching the ground where the iron ores occur, there is a considerable area where the entire alluvium is more or less auriferous. Among minor minerals, I have come upon asbestos, opal and agate. Altogether, the area is one of great mineral possibilities.
>
> Should you entertain the idea of starting iron works in their state, His Highness the Maharaja will, I have no doubt, afford you every facility and grant you liberal concessions. I see from a para in the papers that you are about to start iron works in the neighbourhood of Barakar. Before you do so, you will, I trust, fully consider whether it would not be more

advantageous to locate them in this State, as the ores here are incomparably richer than those of the Barakar area. There is only one drawback. Coal appears to be absent. But coke from either Jharia or the Raniganj coal field could be brought at a comparatively small cost.

Yours faithfully,

P.N. Bose

State Geologist

This 'very loveable and modest gentleman', as Sir Ardeshir Dalal once called P.N. Bose, declared that he had found very rich deposits of iron, not far from limestone and far closer to the coalfields of Raniganj and Jharia, closer too to the port of Calcutta, in Mayurbhanj state. He refused to call himself the discoverer, for he pointed out that these deposits had always been known to local iron workers, but it was due to him that the fact became known to the Tata explorers, and monuments to his memory at Jamshedpur and Gorumahisani testify to the importance of his find. The timing of these two events one after the other was like a finger pointing to the same region. Meanwhile Jamsetji had passed away, but the work he had initiated continued.

Weld immediately sent Srinivas Rao to investigate the report and the latter confirmed that there were in fact large quantities of rich iron ore in Mayurbhanj. Weld then prepared two complete plans; one, to build the works somewhere near Mayurbhanj if the ores there proved to be as claimed, drawing coal from Jharia and flux from Bisra. The other was to establish the plant at Padampur, in case Mayurbhanj should prove to be a false hope and he would have to depend on the Dhalli-Rajhara hills for ore, with coal from Jharia and using the local limestone for flux. Weld went to America, consulted with Perin and early in 1905 returned with Perin to India. The maharaja of Mayurbhanj was anxious to develop his state and gave the Tata experts a cordial welcome when they arrived at Baripada for preliminary discussions.

Soon afterwards, Weld, accompanied by P.N. Bose and Perin this time, experienced once again the dangers, discomforts and exhilaration of exploring a trackless jungle.

They were guided on their way by a succession of tribal iron workers who for centuries had exploited the deposits of ore in their humble furnaces. At last they found, in the lofty Gorumahisani Hill, rising to nearly 3000 feet, a superb store of iron ore, later estimated to amount to some thirty-five million tons; it was mainly haematite with an average iron content of over 60 per cent. It was not quite so

extensive or quite so rich as that in Dhalli-Rajhara, but it was much more favourably situated, as the hundreds of acres of rich 'float-ore' lay loose on the surface, where it could simply be picked up by unskilled labour. Indeed until the end of 1928 the whole of the ore collected at Gorumahisani was float-mixed with earth on the plains and flanks of the hill. The explorers had found a treasure house 'far more potentially valuable than most gold mines'. There were also other hills, almost equally rich, that were mined in later years.

In 1982 when the author visited Gorumahisani the fields below were under cultivation and the villagers lived in dread of the elephants in the jungles nearby as they would swoop down on their fields when the crop was ripe and break all fences to help themselves to a banquet. The villagers wondered how the elephants came to know when the crops were ripe!

Gorumahisani was in the middle of the forest, it was obvious that another site would have to be found for the actual works. Moreover, the steel plant would require a constant source of water 365 days of the year. Weld and Perin continued their investigations, now in the hottest season of the year, and Weld suffered badly from fever. At last, they found a little junction called Sini, which was fairly close to the sources of three of the essential raw materials required—iron ore, coal and limestone. Perin then left.

P.N. Bose in an article in the *TISCO Review,* 1933, wrote: 'I have very pleasant reminiscences of my jungle life with them, especially of the interesting conversations I used to have with them after our day's work. We had to do hard work in the jungles either on foot or on elephant and as they were state guests I provided beer and other alcoholic drinks for them. But all the time we were engaged in the jungles, they would not only abstain from such drinks but eschewed even such an exhilarating mild stimulant as tea. They would drink only soda water.'

Many an adventure took place. Meanwhile Weld had found a brilliant assistant, Srinivas Rao (who later died of cholera contracted in the course of exploration). If one factor was available, the other was not. Fortune smiled early one morning in December 1907. Srinivas Rao and Weld mounted their horses at Sini and took to the river bed where the Subarnarekha is crossed by the Bengal-Nagpur Railway branch to the coalfields. For some hours they plodded downstream, their horses making heavy going through the sand. At length they came upon a sight which filled them with joy; a black trap-dike, crossing the river diagonally, and making an almost perfect

natural pick-up weir. It seemed too good to be true. They clambered up the river-bank shouting with excitement and found themselves close by the village of Sakchi near the meeting point of the two rivers, the Khorkai and the 'gold-streaked' Subarnarekha, which, together, never run dry. They were only a couple of miles from the railway station at Kalimati connecting with the port of Calcutta.

On Christmas Day 1907 the first tent was pitched close to the village of Sakchi.

Soon afterwards Axel Sahlin arrived with the resident construction engineer, W.O. Renkin, at Kalimati. They were taken in a triumphant procession of tongas, bullock-carts and an elephant, on which Sahlin himself rode, and immediately plans were made for a concrete pick-up weir and the purchase of equipment and plant.

On 27 February 1908 the first stake was driven on a forest-covered plateau at Sakchi. Axel Sahlin, who was brought to the jungle with great fanfare, wrote a booklet on his personal impressions that demonstrates what happened and how in 1908: '. . . and so started off our miles into the jungle: white, yellow, brown and black, all were there. The saises of the Tata Steel Co., already gay in their new blue and khaki uniforms and large blue turbans; the coolies of necessity in glossy black with a white loin cloth; our servants in their gay headgear and varying complexions; we ourselves in pith helmets, leather putties and light clothes. I assure you it made a motley crowd when we were swallowed up in the jungle.'

When he left he wrote: 'This has been one of the most interesting experiences in my life, this free and crude life in a jungle camp, where, until six weeks ago, nature lay untouched by human hand and where animals live their lives . . . But the time did come to leave our pleasant camp. The last tour was made through the long glades, where eight weeks earlier stood untouched jungle, to the sandy river bottom, now alive with workers, a little town of tents, fibre mat huts and a few bungalows. In the moon lit night, I had my last ride to Kalimati Station, patted the white nag who had given me so many pleasant hours and was off. When next I come back, my old jungle will not be there.'

Jamsetji's dream did come true three years after he was no more.

Perin was the key figure round which Tata Steel grew from a 100,000 tonne plant in 1912 to being 'the largest *integrated* steel plant in the British Empire' before World War II.

Perin's firm had designed and given Tata Steel over a 100,000 blue prints and tracings. In 1933, on the golden anniversary of Perin

captaining the Harvard rowing team, 1883, the old boat was pulled out in the river again and Charles Perin was invited to captain the team once more.

In 1935 Perin visited the Tata Iron and Steel Company for the last time. He contracted dysentery from which he never fully recovered. Weakened, this giant, physically and professionally, caught pneumonia. After thirty years of service to Tatas he passed away in 1937.

Jamsetji had indeed ‘found’ the man he had been looking for.

# 20

# Unearthing India's Hidden Wealth

### Tata Steel—III

*Do you mean to say that Tatas propose to make steel rails to British specifications? Why, I will undertake to eat every pound of steel rail they succeed in making.*

—Sir Frederick Upcott, chairman, Indian Railways Board, to Perin

Once Gorumahisani with floating iron ore was found—which itself would save a fortune on mining—Tatas seriously launched on raising the finances. Many never believed the extent of money needed could be found in India—over 2 million pounds sterling. And would the Indian investors, used mostly to textile mills, rise to the opportunity? Furthermore, it was a project with a long gestation period and some risk.

The formidable reputation of Tatas and the thoroughness of their procedure had elicited the admiration of British experts in the Geological Survey of India. Sir Thomas Holland wrote of them in 1906 as 'men whose ventures, inspired by patriotic motives, are conducted with cautious regard to business risks involved' and declared he had seen no mineral enterprise undertaken so scientifically in India. Tatas had invested their own Rs. 4 to 5 lakh by then, a huge sum for the times.

Jamsetji was not daunted by the prospect of raising money in India but, as he told Dadabhai Naoroji, the Indian investor would expect a higher return while the American would settle for 4 to 6 per cent.

Verrier Elwin in his very readable book, The *Story of Tata Steel,* says:

> For two years Dorabji, who was joined there by Padshah, negotiated for finance in London. Expert British opinion reported favourably on the scheme; Government was ready to help by building a branch line directly the Company was formed. Unhappily, the London market was passing through a bad period of depression; British financiers wanted a

> disproportionate degree of control over the undertaking if they were to put their money in it; and in any case they were doubtful of India's ability to make steel, however good the ore deposits might be. '

But a new factor, a political one, came to the help of Tatas. In 1907 a wave of enthusiasm for the newly conceived Swadeshi movement swept across India. Nations should not be dependent on other nations; they should help themselves, went the thinking. Indian resources and industries should be developed by Indians. It was economically unsound to export vast quantities, for example, of manganese ore to Europe and America and then to buy back the finished product at high cost. Dadabhai Naoroji was very clear on the subject: the wealth of India should not be drained out.

In 1907, while Dorabji Tata was struggling to raise money in London, a young Indian student went up to Cambridge; years later, that student, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote about his feelings at the time. 'From 1907 onwards for several years India was seething with unrest and trouble. For the first time since the Revolt of 1857, India was showing fight and not submitting tamely to foreign rule. News of Tilak's activities and his conviction, of Aurobindo Ghose and the way the masses of Bengal were taking the swadeshi and boycott pledge stirred all of us Indians in England.' The question of independence was also stirring businessmen in India.

Tatas therefore issued a circular giving a detailed account of their plans, registered the Tata Iron and Steel Company in Bombay on 26 August 1907 and the following day issued a formal prospectus. This offered 150 lakh of rupees in ordinary, 7 lakh in deferred and 75 lakh in 6 per cent cumulative preference shares, a total of nearly 232 lakh or £1,545,000 sterling. The total Tata stake was Rs. 25 lakh—about 11 per cent of the total capital subscribed.

Immediately there was an enthusiastic demand. Most of the equity capital came from a small group of very rich men, but a large number of investors, inspired by the dream of an India economically independent of other nations, took a modest number of shares in the preference stock. The Tata office was besieged. 'The people lined up in front of Navsari Mansions like Londoners waiting for first-night seats in the pit, some of them with stools and lunch-boxes.'

Altogether some 8,000 people subscribed within three weeks. Many years later Dorabji wrote how proud he was of this achievement, 'as for the first time in India's financial history I had succeeded in raising for industrial purposes such a vast sum from the hidden wealth of

India for the development of our mineral resources. It was the first time that the raw materials of India did not go out and return as finished articles to be sold in the country. Above all, it was a purely Swadeshi enterprise financed by Swadeshi money and managed by Swadeshi brains.'

When debentures were invited for working capital, the maharaja of Gwalior took the entire issue for 400,000 pounds sterling under the advice, no doubt, of his financial consultant, F.E. Dinshaw. The latter remained a lifelong friend, supporter and adviser of Tatas.*

When the prospectus was issued, the name 'Tatas' came into use for the company. Jamsetji never used the name 'Tata' for any company save his shipping line: it was Empress 1874; Svadeshi 1882; and Indian Hotels 1903. The prestige of his name was utilized for the first time by his sons and colleagues.

In December 1907 the site was found. In February 1912, the first ingot of steel rolled on the lines of the Sakchi plant amidst much rejoicing. During World War I Tatas exported 1500 miles of steel rails to Mesopotamia. Dorab Tata commented dryly that if Sir Frederick had carried out his undertaking, he would have had 'some slight indigestion'.

Between the two rivers, a city had to be planned. As the jungles were cleared, in place of towering trees, steel chimneys arose. At the same time, in another part, a township grew.

Though the maharaja of Mayurbhanj had given highly favourable terms to Tatas, the local 'kings' of the jungle were less hospitable. Tigers killed two tribal labourers. An elephant driven frantic by the din of dam construction stampeded over a number of huts and flattened them. One night a bear crawled into the hut of the railways superintendent and delivered a cub under his table!

Erecting a plan of this nature in the wilderness was called by contemporaries 'a titanic enterprise'. Communications were slow; machinery was hauled over vast distances from home or abroad; labour had to be trained. There was then no pool of technicians or scientists at home to draw upon.

In the early stages, coal was not of uniform quality, and the design of the furnaces was found unsatisfactory. Even the German crew for the blast furnace was not up to the mark. Perin was summoned again from America.

All the time Julian Kennedy was guiding them. Jamsetji had consulted him during his first visit to the USA, in 1902. Kennedy was the top man for the purpose in America. When Andrew Carnegie and

J.P. Morgan were putting the U.S. Steel Corporation together they wanted certain plants appraised. They agreed that whatever assessment Julian Kennedy put on each plant was the value at which it would go into the corporation. He would simply walk through a plant and without making any calculations on paper come up with a final figure.

When the steel plant opened, people came from all corners of India to Sakchi, even though travel was not as easy then as it is now. From Pathans in the north-west to Tamilians from the south they came. The steel town became a microcosm of India—its first truly cosmopolitan town.

# 21

# The Viceroy and the Charkha

**Tata Steel—IV**

*Tatas represent the spirit of adventure.*

—Mahatma Gandhi

In August 1914 the guns boomed in Europe and the repercussions of World War I were felt round the globe. Germany had an eye on West Asia and the war spilled into the Mesopotamia (Iraq) area. German U-boats played havoc with Allied shipping especially on the Atlantic and the Mediterranean routes. The Suez Canal was a danger zone. Britain desperately needed steel rails for Mesopotamia. East of Suez, the Tata Iron and Steel Company was the only steel producer in the British Empire.

This small plant (in today's terms) in the town of Sakchi supplied 1500 miles of steel rails for Mesopotamia and the region. In December 1916, a confident chairman was to speak to shareholders of 'Bumper earning; production 30 per cent above original design . . . Ready and willing markets . . . Order book full to bursting.' The success was intoxicating. An ambitious programme was taken in hand to expand the steel capacity by five times.

When the guns fell silent on 11 November 1918 and Whitehall took stock they realized that they owed the Tata Company. On 2 January 1919 Lord Chelmsford, viceroy of India, steamed into Kalimati station in his white and gold coach. After seeing round the works the viceroy spoke from the steps of the new director's bungalow: 'I can hardly imagine what we should have done during these four years (of war) if the Tata Company had not been able to give us steel rails which have been provided for us not only for Mesopotamia but for Egypt, Palestine and East Africa, and I have come to express my thanks . . . It is hard to imagine that ten years ago, this place was scrub and jungle; and here we have now, this place set up with all its foundries and its

workshops and its population of 40,000 to 50,000 people. This great enterprise has been due to imagination and genius of the late Mr Jamshedji Tata . . . This place will see a change in its name and will no longer be known as Sakchi, but will be identified with the name of its founder, bearing down the ages the name of the late Mr Jamshedji Tata—Hereafter, this place will be known by the name Jamshedpur.'

So saying he unveiled on the archway atop the director's bungalow the new name. The name of the station too was changed from Kalimati to Tatanagar.

This evaluation of the British viceroy was to come in helpful. One day a telegram came from Jamshedpur that there was not enough money for wages. R.D.Tata and Sir Dorab Tata (who was knighted in 1910) struggled to raise funds. In November 1924, the steel company was on the verge of closing down. Sir Dorab pledged his entire personal fortune of Rs. 1 crore, including his wife's jewellery, to obtain a loan of the same amount from the Imperial Bank of India. It was touch and go whether the firm would survive.

Sir Dorab's commitment was honoured by providence. Meanwhile, a new threat had arisen from the dumping of foreign steel. Thanks to Motilal Nehru and the Congress Legislative Party in the Central Assembly, the British government finally consented to impose protective duties on imported steel and paid a bounty on steel rails for three years from 1924. Soon, the first returns from expanded production came in and gave the company a breather.

Throughout this struggle for survival not one worker was retrenched. The shareholders went without a dividend for twelve out of thirteen years. There was a certain vision and spaciousness about the men Jamsetji built and the times they lived in.

Just before the first ingot of steel rolled in TISCO in February 1912, R.D. Tata had told the shareholders: 'Like all infants this company will have its infantile ailments, its period of convulsions and teething as well as hours of smiles and caresses. It will be then that your courage and ours will be tested.'

His prophecy was to come true.

In 1924 when TISCO appealed to the government against dumping of post-war steel in India the British-controlled Cawnpore Chamber of Commerce protested on behalf of British trade interests against the import tariff. For the first time during British rule, the government did not put Britain's interest ahead of India's.

National leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajendra Prasad and Subhash Chandra Bose visited Jamshedpur. At a difficult time, when a

disruptive unionist came on the scene, Bose was particularly supportive of Tatas.

In 1924 Gandhiji visited Jamshedpur. The directors had a room ready for him. Hardly had he entered the room when he objected to British goods in it—mattresses, pillows, drapes and carpets. The housekeeper, Mrs Ashby, removed them all. 'Will you be quite comfortable with so many things removed from the room, Mahatmaji?' asked Mrs Ashby.

'I'll be comfortable with just a garment,' was the rejoinder.

There at the hub of India's heavy industry Gandhiji installed his wooden charkha and started spinning.

When Gandhiji arrived that morning flowers and buntings decorated the crowded streets. That evening he briefly addressed the workers recalling Sir Ratan Tata who was the major financial supporter of his work in South Africa.

Mrs Ashby recalls when he left late at night 'the outward path was strewn with fading flowers and dying palms of the morning's acclaim . . . There were no cheering crowds . . . Only a pitifully few half-hearted cries, "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jai" . . . but the saint had passed that way.'

# 22

# A New Source of Energy

### Hydro-electric Power—I

*I should say a few words in reference to the spirit which animated those who conceived and executed these works. This is primarily an industrial enterprise: we hope that it will earn substantial profits for the shareholders. But it is something more than a money-making concern. To my father the Hydro-Electric project was not merely a dividend-earning scheme; it was a means to an end—the development of the manufacturing power of Bombay. It is in that spirit that we have carried out the fruitful ideas he bequeathed to us ... the great sums of money needed were forthcoming mainly because those who commanded them believed that the scheme would assuredly play an important part in the industrial renaissance of India which is of paramount importance to the whole future of the country.*

—Sir Dorabji Tata speaking before the governor of Bombay, Lord Willingdon, switched on electric power to the first mill, 8 February 1915.

The first successful experiment to use hydro-power was by a Frenchman, Daniel Joneaire, in 1757. He tried to draw the flow of Niagara River to turn a waterwheel for a sawmill.

The first commercial scale hydro-electric plant was built on the Fox river in Wisconsin in 1882. It had a capacity of 200 KW. The first of many hydro-electric plants at Niagara Falls came up soon after.

At least six years earlier, in 1875, it is recorded that Jamsetji Tata thought he could explore the development of hydraulic energy in connection with setting up of Empress Mills. He surveyed the falls at Jubbulpore where the Narmada River rushes between the Marble Rocks. He even tried to negotiate the purchase of the necessary land. The negotiations fell through because a fakir had his abode there. The government felt it would hurt the sentiments of his large following to remove him.

In 1897 an enterprising company established the first hydro-electric plant (130 KW) using waterfalls near Darjeeling to supply power to tea estates. Jamsetji had an interest with others in trying to generate

hydro-electric power on the borders of Goa at Doodhsagar Falls—the power generated to be consumed by Bombay State. Goa was a Portuguese territory and the electricity had to come to British India. The idea seems to have been dropped by him for a better one. He had earlier recommended a Bombay architect, David Gostling, to Robert Miller, who wanted to explore the Doodhsagar falls in Goa.

Gostling used to spend some months of the year in Lonavla, a hill station of the Western Ghats. Three miles away going towards the valley is Khandala with a sharp gradient into the valley. Lonavla with its heavy rainfall could provide the catchment area and the harnessed water racing down 1800 feet via Khandala could create an artificial waterfall. When Gostling spoke about his scheme Jamsetji immediately saw the possibilities. However, the power would have to be transmitted across a distance of 50 miles to Bombay, a feat which had not been attempted anywhere till then.

It also involved a dam to hold the water first, funnel it through big pipes, via Khandala, and then release it to the valley at Khopoli, where the generating plant would be established.

On 10 May 1901, Jamsetji spelt out the two hydroelectric schemes he was exploring to Richmond Ritchie. ‘Neither,’ he said, ‘was far enough advanced at the time of my visit to England, to then trouble his Lordship about.’

He informed the secretary of state of the two concessions he was seeking. For Goa permission from the Portuguese government to use a waterfall just within its territory and later utilize a portion of the power in British territory.

Then he spelt out the scheme of another syndicate for the Western Ghats power project—a syndicate comprising East India merchants Macdonald Miller & Co. of Glasgow, and Messrs. Gostling & Morris who had surveyed the area in detail. Jamsetji was at first sceptical of transmitting power over such a long distance to Bombay, but ‘it was only during my recent visit to England that I became convinced that electrical power had so far advanced that the scheme was immediately practicable for the initiation and development of electric light and power in Bombay and its neighbourhood’.

He said they were keeping the scheme a ‘secret’ from the Bombay authorities and the Indian government until they recognized the syndicate as the discoverers and surveyors of the valley in question. ‘No one would suspect that it is possible so to dam the valley (in Lonavla) as to turn it into a lake. The valley is several miles away from the discharge down the Ghauts where the power would be

developed. These particulars indicate many engineering difficulties which have taken year to solve, and of which we naturally desire to reap the benefit,' Jamsetji wrote to Ritchie.

Jamsetji was cautious about the power of a British company to stymie the scheme.

He concluded his letter: 'We hope with the power available to run the tramways of Bombay, to supply as much electric lighting as may be required in Bombay, and to have a balance over for the supply of power in a few cotton mills, and sufficient for small local industries.'

A year later he was more confident and raised the matter with the governor of Bombay.

In November 1902 he met Lord Hamilton for the second time when he obviously discussed the scheme for tapping power in the Western Ghats, though perhaps the discussions were mainly about his university and steel schemes. He followed it up with a detailed note from Bombay a month later, on 24 December 1902.

The note says that Bombay provides a profitable market 'with fair field and no favour. But the fair field seems to be doubtful. It seems that the Brush Electric Company of London have obtained from the Bombay Corporation the licence to be the sole suppliers of electricity to the city; the interest of the Municipality was in electric traction (for trams), and street lighting; but the general terms in which the licence appears to have been made out give the company power to prevent laying down of overhead or underground wires for electric purposes. The Bombay Telephone Company, in which I hold an important interest, which has served the Town long before the Brush Company came in, is to look out for wire-space at the mercy of the Brush Company, on the expiry of its present concession. The Brush Company appear by no means disinclined to make the most rigorous use of their power (concession). One illustration, I am in need of electricity for lighting and power purposes for my Hotel in Bombay. The Brush Company will accept nothing under 6 annas per unit of light, whereas the manufacturers who are putting up an installation for me (oil generated) guarantee a cost not exceeding a quarter of the Brush Co's quotation. And they threaten in so many words that if they can help it, they will not allow any use of my own power for my own purposes—they will not allow any of my wires under the public roads. My legal advisers are considering the situation as has now arisen with regard to the Ghat scheme, and I have had an interview with H.E. the Governor of Bombay. Some fresh legislation on electric matters has been passed for Calcutta, and a bill on similar lines is under contemplation in

Bombay. I am sure that the interests of a fair field and no favour are safe in the hands of the Bombay Government. If so, I have the pleasure of announcing that on a re-survey, I find the Catchment area larger than was originally measured, thus giving a 59,000 H.P. instead of the twenty or twenty-five thousand H.P. originally estimated.'

Hamilton must have written to the governor of Bombay. Jamsetji found the governor, Lord Northcote, most responsive. Incidentally both the hydro-electric and the steel projects had sparked the imagination of Lord Hamilton and his private secretary. Ritchie wrote to Jamsetji: 'As to the second scheme for utilizing the electric power generated in the heights of the Ghats for the purposes of Bombay and its neighbourhood, Lord George can only say that if it is brought to a successful issue it will be an achievement of which you may indeed be proud.'

# 23

# The Current Flows

### Hydro-electric Power—II

Jamsetji had worked with a strategy on his hydro-electric scheme. Concessions had been given in Bombay and one company was to generate electricity through steam power. While others worked on the ground in India he went to London and recruited support there. The British administrators were not slow to recognize the advantages of hydro over steam-generated power.

Jamsetji worked under colonial rule and this posed its problems with his proposal for an institute of science, but, surprisingly, on both the steel and the hydro-electric project, government-wise he had less problems than he would have encountered a hundred years later. For there were no corrupt officers to face, and the officers he dealt with were men of their word. The only gift they would agree to receive in India was a hamper at Christmas, consisting of tinned ham, wine and the like.

After Jamsetji passed away in 1904, Lord Northcote was succeeded as Bombay's governor by Sir George Clarke, later Lord Sydenham. Sydenham was an engineer by profession and the concept of a project generating power through an artificial 'waterfall' fascinated him.

Jamsetji and Dorab were very fortunate in the calibre of the technical men who worked with them. The greatest credit goes to David Gostling, who accurately surveyed the site, and a retired Public Works Engineer called R.B. Joyner who had worked on irrigation projects and was to do excellent work on the design of dams and ducts. Jamsetji's comparatively small scheme enlarged to a series of three artificial lakes linked with each other to ensure there was never a shortage of water. In addition to the Walwhan dam at Lonavla was the Shirwata, 7680ft long and 93ft high and containing 16 million cubic feet of stone. It was hailed as an achievement greater than the first Aswan Dam built in 1902.

Two of the largest mill owners assured to lift the power and convert from steam to electric power—Sir David Sassoon and Sir Shapurji Bharucha.

After futile attempts to tap the foreign market for funds, moral support came from Lord Sydenham. Opening a new cotton mill in Sholapur in 1910 he said: 'There is an excellent hydro-electric project for Bombay, which awaits initiation . . . and it was my great hope that the scheme could be launched entirely upon Indian capital.' He encouraged Sir Dorabji to take the risk to raise the capital within India.

Dorab Tata toured the enlightened Indian states and got promises of support. When the scheme opened for subscription, as with steel so with the hydro-electric project, India furnished the whole capital. This major scheme was handled by a board of directors who—save one—were all Indians. The Rs. 2 crore may not sound much today but it was an astounding figure for those days, comparable to a mega issue of thousands of crores today. The money was raised in November 1910 and on February 1911 the foundation ceremony of Walwhan Dam was performed. Sir Dorabji, knighted by now, spoke of his father on the occasion: 'To my father the acquisition of wealth was only a secondary object in life; it was always subordinate to the constant desire in his heart to improve the industrial and intellectual condition of the people of this country; and the various enterprises which he from time to time undertook in his life-time had for their principal object the advancement of India in these important respects. To me it is a matter of the utmost regret that he is not alive today to see the accomplishment of the three cherished aims of the last years of his life —viz., the Research Institute, the Iron and Steel project, and the Hydro-Electric Scheme . . . Kind fate has, however, permitted me to help in bringing to completion his inestimable legacy of service to the country, and it is a matter of the greatest gratification to his sons to have been permitted to carry to fruition the sacred trust which he committed to their charge.'

Lord Sydenham said on the occasion: 'It symbolizes the confidence of Indians in themselves, their willingness to be associated with a project somewhat unfamiliar in this country, and their assurance of the political stability which alone can guarantee the continual advancement of India.'

After the ceremony an army of 7000 workers moved in and the months to follow witnessed installation of pipelines purchased from Essen, Germany; waterwheels from Switzerland; generators from

America and cables from England. Huge pipes seven feet in diameter were laid, each on rough-hewn rock for solid support, each so well soldered that there was no seepage, though the water flowed at enormous pressure through them. After ninety years they still hold.

Exactly four years after the foundation of the Walwhan Dam was laid, Lord Willingdon pressed a switch and the first mill—Simplex—received electric power. One-third of all mills followed, as would the Bombay Electric Supply and Tramways (BEST). Two more electric companies were floated by Tatas to supply power to Bombay.

Lord Willingdon complimented Jamsetji's two sons and called the electric power company 'another magnificent; permanent memorial to your father's great service to his country'.

# 24

# The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

To perceive a need and to meet it is one secret of good business. In the mad, mad rush of the cotton boom Bombay was called ‘the city of gold’, but not every prospect pleased—houses stood cheek to jowl in the Fort area and unhygienic conditions prevailed. Rats seemed to be the rulers by night. The bubonic plague which broke out in 1898 was ascribed to these conditions and it dragged on for four years.

The number of the middle class, especially the British segment, was rising. More people were coming into the city, people engaged in trade and banking, and the ‘burra sahibs’ contemptuously called them ‘boxwallas’. They complained there were no decent hotels to stay in. Watson’s Hotel at Esplanade Mansion at Kala Ghoda was supposed to be the best but far below European standards. Great Western and Pyrkes Apollo Hotels were others. Their rooms were small, ventilation poor and heat unbearable, more so with the mosquito curtains.

Jamsetji having installed himself comfortably in his Esplanade House bought a nearby plot of land and built a very comfortable residence called Gymkhana Chambers, ensuring there were adequate baths and extending from his personal generator nearby electricity for the house.

Jamsetji did not wear his heart on a sleeve. His estate agent, Jamshedji Saklatvala, in his unpublished manuscript wrote that nobody could understand why he was buying land at such a fast pace. Writing many years later he says it is likely Jamsetji was buying land to ensure funds for the institute of science that he was planning to set up.

Being an ardent fan of Mark Twain Jamsetji may have read of the writer’s fate in ‘the best’ Watson’s Hotel: ‘He and his family were roused every morning at dawn by doors slamming, servants shouting and “fiendish bursts of laughter, explosions of dynamite”. The Irish chef at the hotel was apparently more conversant with the French

language than with French cooking, serving up Irish stew on 14 occasions under 14 different French names.' The story goes that Jamsetji took a foreign guest to one of these hotels and at the door he was told the guest could come in but 'sorry, Indians were not allowed'. At that point he was supposed to have stated that he would build a hotel that would put them all in the shade. Sharada Dwivedi, who has written a book on the hotel with Charles Allen, The *Taj: The Story of the Taj Mahal Hotel, Bombay, 1903-2003,* thinks this is far-fetched. She says Jamsetji was too well acquainted with the handful of hotels in the city to deliberately risk an insult.

Sir Stanley Reed is probably closer to the mark. 'He had an intense pride and affection for the city of his birth, and when a friend protested against the intense discomforts of hotel life in Bombay he growled: "I will build one."'

One day without consulting anybody, not even his sons or partners, he announced his plan to build a grand hotel. It was his personal contribution and money he was putting in—not that of Tata & Sons. Along the present Yacht Club at Apollo Bunder was a little bay where yachts used to scull. The British were reclaiming the land and he bought a substantial site of two and a half acres on 1 November 1898 on a ninety-nine-year lease. There was no formal laying of a foundation stone but a traditional coconut was broken and a Parsi diva (oil lamp) was lit, perhaps by the well or spring between the present swimming pool and the lifts. This ceremony took place in 1900.

The 1880s and 1890s were a time of great construction in Bombay. The Grand Victoria Terminus was built, and after it the Municipal Corporation building, another beautiful structure, followed by the Churchgate headquarters of the B.B.& C.I. Railways (now Western Railways). The architect was F.W. Stevens. Stevens had helping him a Hindu engineer called Raosaheb Sitaram Khanderao Vaidya. There was also one other assistant, one D.N. Mirza, a Parsi.

Many an interesting story is invented round the Taj being designed by an Italian/French architect who after his exertions went home and returned to find the building was put the wrong way round—what should have been in the rear was in front and vice versa. Heartbroken he went to the top floor of the Taj and flung himself out of the window. Dramatic! Touching! But not true. As anyone who stayed at the then non-air-conditioned Taj in the summer would attest, the late afternoon breezes that blow across Colaba do not spring up from the harbour but sweep in from across Back Bay. The U-shaped wings of

the hotel were positioned to trap this breeze and extract the most benefit. Indeed, the necessity to draw whatever relief there might be from the torrid heat of western India was certainly the inspiration behind the hotel's two most original features. At the time the clientele Jamsetji expected was from abroad and his endeavour was to make the hotel as cool as possible. Thus it had high ceilings and wide corridors, which would be conducive to air circulation. Furthermore, the Wellington Mews—another property Jamsetji bought—behind the hotel site was where the horses and carriages were housed and these could roll in directly from the west side.

One convincing explanation comes from the daughter of a Goan customs officer, Francis Xavier D'Mello, who was stationed in the customs shed at Apollo Bunder and witnessed the Taj rising stone by stone: 'Jamsetji Tata came regularly to watch his great hotel being built. The customs chowki provided the only shelter from the blazing sun,* so Mr Tata used to come there and have long chats with my father. Once my father asked him why he had put the entrance to the Taj at the back, and Jamsetji told him that he wanted the majority of his hotel guests to have rooms overlooking the sea.' Jamsetji surely had some hand in his broad instructions to the architect.

Sadly, having designed the Taj, Sitaram died of malaria. The dome designed on the model of the Victoria Terminus had not been built. Stevens' assistant, W.A. Chambers, was called to help.

The prospectus drawn up for the hotel-to-be underlined some features:

> The Hotel, when completed, will be five storeys high, and will accommodate, beside hotel boarders to the number of 500, a number of permanent residents. Immense cellars, below the ground floor level will contain the refrigeration plant, which will cool the rooms of the inmates, and will also enable their food to be stored in a manner foreign to India. The ground floor will be occupied by the offices, first-class restaurants, and shops for the sale of articles generally desired by travellers. The first floor will be mostly taken up with a grand dining room, drawing room, reading rooms, billiard room, and a few grand suites, all provided with electric fans. The second, third, fourth and fifth floors will contain bedrooms, mostly double, and furnished in the Continental style with sofa, tables and chairs, and other furniture, and on each floor bathrooms and lavatories. The kitchens, etc., will be on the top of the house with a roof garden. The Hotel will be lighted throughout with electric lights, and many lifts, also worked by electricity, will convey residents from floor to floor with comfort. A Turkish bath will also be fitted up in the Hotel.

The only mistake in the plan was probably the kitchen at the top

(rectified later) but perhaps Sitaram was protecting the guests from the fumes and odours of food.

Jamsetji personally went to order the electrical machinery from Dusseldorf and chandeliers from Berlin. Furthermore he made sure that if perchance electricity failed, a back-up system of gaslights was at hand.

There was the in-house soda bottling plant, an electric laundry, fans from the USA—and the first spun-steel pillars from the Paris Exhibition where the Eiffel Tower was then the latest wonder of the world. These pillars, a hundred years later, hold up the ceiling of the Banquet Hall.

For all his projects Jamsetji got the costing done thoroughly by Burjorji Padshah, but not for the Taj. It was his gift to the city he loved, as the Taj Mahal at Agra was Shahjehan's memorial to the woman he loved. It cost about Rs. 25 lakh.

The story goes that when he told his sisters his hotel plans one of them burst out in Gujarati, 'What? You want to build a science institute in Bangalore, a great iron and steel factory, a hydro-electric plant and now a Bhattarkhana (an eating place)!'

As if building such a grand edifice was not enough, he purchased two small islands near Uran called Panjoo and Dongri so that the guests at the Taj could go on picnics. He even intended to build a couple of bungalows there. Here his business instinct came in. He planned to use the quarries on the island to reclaim low-lying lands he possessed in north Bombay.

Lovat Fraser, of the *Times of India,* said that Jamsetji told him that the idea of a grand hotel was worthy of Bombay. The idea had long been simmering in his mind, and he had made much study of the subject. He had not the slightest desire to own a hotel, however; his sole wish was to attract people to India, and incidentally to improve Bombay.

Jamsetji wanted to lease out the Taj to an experienced European hotelier. The plans fell through and finding the staff and running the hotel was to fall initially on him in 1902 and later on his partners and colleagues. At one point during his 1902 journey he realized he had hurt Dorab's feelings by his comment on his tastes. Jamsetji had seen young Dorab's rooms at Gonville and Caius College decorated with wallpapers of paintings by William Morris, the Socialist painter. He was afraid that in his long absence abroad Dorab would give instructions that might not be in keeping with the dignity of the hotel. Obviously, Dorab was quite hurt. Jamsetji wrote to him from abroad:

> I am extremely sorry I should unintentionally have injured your feelings in connection with the construction of our new hotel. I thought you had already enough to do to attend to the mills business, and you would be coming in only as a critic of what others were doing. Of course, as you should know by this time, the canons of architecture, decoration, etc., are as yet very arbitrary: even in Europe ideas differ so widely that all the continent still laughs at the pretensions of English architects and *vice versa*. America has wonderful ideas of beauty or some would call ugliness. Fancy their fondness for brick-red interiors for their drawing-and-dining-rooms: we may excuse this in a bedroom, if the inmate likes it as a warm colour, but some people regard it as hugely ugly. In this matter there is no science of taste established, though it is possible at some remote time such a universal agreement may be brought about. But taste in this matter keeps so constantly varying that often fashions change every few years; and what goes out now may come back five or ten years hence. Under the circumstances, we must try to do what we think our customers would like. But even here we are likely to be at fault; there are no two hotels alike in decoration or furnishings, in such cases somebody with the greatest and most varied experience should be left a free hand. Your experience by this time must be considerable, and I have no objection to leave matters in your hands. But I trust you will take as little as possible from the modern "aesthete" and avoid their abominable yellows and reds as much as possible. I am trying to leave instructions behind to finish up all the remaining orders in connection with the hotel . . . In conclusion, let me trust that you will free your mind from the suspicion that I distrust your taste in architecture and cognate subjects.

Perhaps, say Allen and Dwivedi, Jamsetji believed in starting a new venture on an auspicious date—'Muhurat' as it is called—and he decided to open the hotel on 16 December 1903, before the building was complete—only one wing was ready, the dome still had to be completed. A study of his medical reports of late 1903 quoted in the last chapter of this book shows his condition was deteriorating. So it could be that his sons and colleagues may have decided to speed up the opening so he could have the satisfaction of seeing at least one of his dreams come true.

Five months after the Muhurat, when Jamsetji died, a leading journal of Calcutta, *The Empress,* wrote in the obituary:

> The new hotel represented, to Mr Tata, something more than a mere commercial venture, and he had determined that the Taj Mahal Hotel should set an example, which should re-act throughout India, in removing one of the greatest hindrances to agreeable travel in this country. The plans were drawn with the sole purpose of securing an entirely worthy building, and he looked for no immediate financial returns. There is something peculiarly saddening in the coincidence that the fixing of the key-stone of the noble dome should have preceded, but only a few days,

the death of the man who inspired it.

The lives of the clientele, which was mainly British, revolved round news from home. The P. & O. brought the mail every Friday morning and left every Saturday evening. The London GPO's largest single destination was mail for India. It was rushed from London, sorted out between Aden and Bombay, and special bags delivered within an hour of the arrival of the steamer. Saturday was spent in answering letters. The Sea Lounge at the Taj was created as a letter-writing room and by special arrangement mail from the Taj was directly delivered to the ship.

In years to come world-renowned personalities have stayed there, from Somerset Maugham and Duke Ellington to Lord Mountbatten and Bill Clinton. The hotel has featured in a hundred books, including Louis Bromfield's, *Night in Bombay,* which is centred on the Taj.

The maharajas became the great patrons of the Taj and invited the hotel to do special catering in their states. The Chamber of Princes was to meet there regularly every January—hence the 'Princes Room' at the southern end of the Taj.

The business maharajas were to follow next; today the Taj is the most sought after venue for wedding receptions, and one can frequently see fire crackers being let off at the gate as the bridegroom's party dances merrily away.

As there was no Gateway of India for twenty years after the Taj came up the hotel offered the first view of the city to ships sailing into the harbour until 1924. Even now, with many more tall buildings on the skyline, the hotel engages immediate attention.

# 25

# The Men Jamsetji Built

*When I dream alone it is a dream.*

*When we dream together it is a reality.*

—Brazilian proverb

It is one thing to understand how Jamsetji built the team that he did, it is another to comprehend why these men took all his three great schemes to fruition. The lives of two of his close colleagues give some insight into Jamsetji and the quality of the men he picked.

It is interesting that his schemes for the development of Bombay did not evoke the same zealousness in his team except in his son, Ratan, who did his best. Obviously, as Dorab's letters show, they were too occupied with the national projects Jamsetji had started and Ratan may well have felt lonely and unappreciated. Nevertheless, to his credit, he too was faithful to his father's difficult development schemes for Bombay.

Sir Ratan devoted himself to art and philanthropy. The Tata Gallery at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum, formerly the Prince of Wales Museum, is a witness to his love for art. He was the first substantial supporter of Gandhiji during his struggle in South Africa. It was he who financed the excavation of Pataliputra which unearthed Ashoka's palace built on the model of Persepolis giving indications of the Zoroastrian link of India with ancient Persia.*

In 1916 his ship was torpedoed in the Mediterranean by a German submarine. For twenty-four hours he was on a raft. The experience shook him. In England he owned York House outside of London which formerly belonged to the Duke of Orleans. He was accepted in London's rather closed high society. Unfortunately he died early, in 1918, when he was only forty-eight.

The purpose came before the men were developed. It was the magnet that drew them. Jamsetji was too big to stop another's growth and the men around him blossomed. The call of his bugle came clear

and resounding, they marched with him. And the march did not stop with his passing away.

There was no jealousy in him. A small man in a big position pulls down the others. The big man, the fearless man, the man inspired with a purpose bigger than himself, enables others to grow, make mistakes and learn and go ahead. Jamsetji left Bezonji at Empress after two years to let him grow. He could devote himself to his other plans because Bezonji freed Jamsetji to do his major projects. After Jamsetji died, apart from his sons, two other men played a prime role in fulfilling Jamsetji's dreams, R.D. Tata and Burjorji Padshah. Jamsetji spotted his maternal uncle's son, Ratanji Dadabhai Tata, and had high regard for him.

Some years later, when he started his holding company, Tata and Sons, in 1887 he invited R.D. to join as a partner. His younger son, Ratan, was a minor then and when he grew of age was added as a partner.

R.D. continued to have his own business in the Far East and was one of the early businessmen from India to make a foray in Japan. He was later given the award of Order of the Rising Sun (Kin-Kiso).† Earlier R.D.'s father had a firm in Hong Kong named D.C. Tata. R.D. also had his own business interest in Paris. Not being associated intimately with Empress or Svadeshi Mills he could afford to travel. He wanted to take lessons in French to facilitate his business in perfumes. It is likely that Jamsetji recommended him a teacher called Mme. Briere, a senior lady. During this period R.D.—who after an unhappy first marriage had lost his wife—got fond of Mme. Briere's stunningly beautiful daughter, Suzanne, who was almost half R.D.'s age—he was forty-five then.

R.D. included Jamsetji, Dorab and his close colleagues in Bombay of his desire to marry Suzanne. In those days it was rare for a Parsi to marry outside his community. To R.D.'s surprise he ran into opposition to the marriage from his cousin, Dorab, Burjorji Padshah and one other called Fardunji.

In 1902 Jamsetji had stopped in Paris on his way to London from Trieste. He was probably acquainted with the girl. Dorab's strong opposition was disturbing to Jamsetji. He asked R.D. to come over to London to see him before the proposed marriage. R.D. complied.

The correspondence between R.D. and Dorab reveals the intensity of Dorab's opposition. In his letter to Dorab of 26 June 1902 R.D. wrote:

> Since some time I have decided to settle down in life though very late and get married. However, never caring what our Parsee community will think

> of it, I was not quite sure if Bapooji (Jamsetji) and the rest of the family may not take it quite kindly. I wrote to him last week. To my most agreeable surprise he in reply not only consented but felt delighted I was taking this step at last to be married to never mind who as long as I thought she will suit me. However he asked me to come down to London to talk this matter over personally. We had a long talk over it this morning and he was again very pleased about this step and even poohpoohed my fear that any of our family will object to it. Bapooji wishes me to write to you and Rutton to break this news quietly among the nearest members of our family without making much noise among outsiders. I needn't assure that after the disastrous experience of my first union, I have taken all the precautions. I take this after most serious reflection and thoughts extending over a long time. I am doing nothing in haste, I am too old to do so . . .

Dorab had conveyed to R.D. that his colleagues did not favour the alliance and advised postponement through a cable on 15 July. At this stage R.D. must have turned to Jamsetji who promptly wired Dorab on 16 July 1902 as follows:

> Ruttonjee cannot postpone marriage.
>
> Raivents = I have no reason to recommend Delay.

Two days later Jamsetji wrote to Dorab:

> As regards Ruttonjee's marriage, I am quite at a loss to understand what reasons induced you to send him a reply urging him the postponement of the wedding. You must of course have had very weighty reasons for taking such a step, but I am unable to understand them. I am here on the spot and I feel perfectly satisfied in every way. Ruttonjee has made sure of carrying out all necessary legal formalities in order to make the union a valid and binding one and he had already published the banns of marriage and it was therefore impossible to postpone it. For these reasons I sent you a wire on the 16th instant (copy of which I herewith enclose). The wedding will take place within a fortnight and I intend going over to Paris to be present at the ceremony.

A day before Jamsetji's cable, on 15 July, Dorab sat down to write what he called, 'one of the most difficult letters I have ever had to write' and listed objections. Dorab felt if R.D. was settling in Europe the marriage could work out but his experience was that European ladies were not at home in India. The letter of Dorab also speaks of the possibility of R.D. settling abroad where he had business interests. He adds that his brother and Fardonji were not for R.D. settling abroad, but 'in fact I always expected you meant to do such a thing'. To write that to his partner (one of the original three) must have been painful to R.D. Dorab asked:

How long can a man of 45 have common views on life with a girl of 25?

He concludes with eight questions:

Are you convinced that at the difference in your ages you ought to marry her?

Are you sure that she can bring herself to adapt her life to yours?

Are you sure that you can adapt your life to hers?

Are you sure that you can jointly adapt your life to your Indian surroundings?

Are you sure that it will not bring unhappiness and distress upon those belonging to you?

Are you sure that you can make her happy?

Are you sure that she will make you happy? Finally

Are you sure that all these various risks are worth taking?

Meanwhile R.D. was writing to Dorab on 18 July:

> I received your wire last Tuesday (15th) which distressed me. I know the girl for over 27 months, last 12 months most intimately for some of which we by accident passed together in Switzerland in company of other Parsee friends. I know her virtues as well as her faults. I don't say she is an angel nor the most perfect of girls, but I can say this much that she is the girl best suited to my temperament found thus far . . . During the last 2 years I have hardly passed a day when I had not thought over this subject with my queries and anxiety and discussed within me all the details taking always the glowing side of it . . . The banns of our marriage were published last Sunday and your telegram I received the Tuesday following. I shall be most probably marrying on the next Thursday, the 24th inst . . . Finally I hope and trust you will do the needful to not to give me unnecessary pain.

He even adds that she has agreed to bring up their children 'in the Parsee faith'.

After marriage R.D. wrote: 'It will distress us very much if my family and friends will not receive her with good grace, as it is even so much nicer to see her taken up by those whom I love.'

Jamsetji invited R.D. and his wife in mid-September for his lavish Kingston-on-Thames party for Parsis on their New Year Day. He made Suzanne sit next to Sir Muncherji Bhownagree who proposed the chief toast. The member of the House of Commons, in the course of his speech, made a gracious reference to Jamsetji's attitude to the marriage. 'I may recall as an example of the enlightened sentiments of our host, that recently an event has happened in his family which, I am told, would have been impossible without his sanction and

consent. I have the great good fortune to have on my right hand a lady of French nationality who is associated in life and fortune for the rest of her days with Mr (R.D.) Tata. If I am rightly informed, Mr Ratanji Tata, the lucky possessor of that bride, had some misgivings as to how the projected union would be regarded by the head of his family. The fact that, in spite of his many years of life and of what may be regarded as his orthodoxy, Mr Jamsetji Tata gave his ready consent to the alliance is one more proof of his progressive tendencies and his interest in the social advancement of the community.'

Had Jamsetji not nurtured R.D. at that crucial stage and had R.D. settled abroad—as Dorab in one of his letters said he might—Tatas would have shaped out differently.

Soon after the Kingston-on-Thames party Jamsetji left on a short visit to the USA and invited the couple of join him. R.D. was there in Bad Nauheim when Jamsetji was dying. Jamsetji gifted him his gold pocket watch, treating him like his son. He told him to make Tatas grow or at least not lose what had been gained.

It is not only the big things people do that they are remembered by but often the seemingly small acts of kindness, care and understanding. Dorab and his wife Meherbai to their credit received R.D. and his bride graciously at the pier when they landed in Bombay and Suzanne was to write to her mother how much Dorab's wife made her feel at home. In the twenty-three years to come R.D. stood like a rock beside Dorab.

R.D. and Suzanne (called Sooni after conversion to Zoroastrianism) had a happy marriage. In 1922—twenty years after marriage—when R.D.'s wife was gravely ill in France he was frantically summoned there. R.D. was fighting a battle to save the Tata Industrial Bank from collapse following a run by depositors. He stayed in Bombay till the crisis was averted. At last he reached the pier and was about to board the ship when a cable was handed to him. It read that his wife had expired.

In 1924 when TISCO was in a desperate position and a faint-hearted director wanted to sell the company, R.D. thumped the table: 'Over my dead body.' His support to Dorab was crucial. A year earlier, at the annual general meeting, when a shareholder criticized Tatas for building sanitary hutments in Jamshedpur rather than give dividends to the shareholders, it was R.D. who thundered. 'We are not building hutments for workers. We are building a city.'

Sir Dorabji had great trust in his solicitor, Jivaji Gandhy, of Wadia Gandhy and Company. Sir Dorabji also got on well with Ardeshir

Billimoria, a young graduate, who was recommended for a job by Padshah. Jamsetji had appointed him as personal assistant and trained him. He turned out to be a competent manager of his vast properties. In due course he became close to Dorabji who was hard to get along with and R.D. specially was at the receiving end. In a letter from Simla of 6 July 1919, Padshah advised R.D. to broach some matter to Sir Dorabji via Billimoria or Jivaji. Padshah's advice to R.D. was to 'cultivate his relations with Meherbai and the ball will be at your feet —tomorrow if not today, the reward for forbearance when you might have had the itch to hit out. Even if it be not, the achievement of forbearance is a greater—far greater—achievement than having your way. So don't fret, it is not worthwhile. Things are better than they seem.' When Sir Dorabji laid his personal fortune at the mercy of the Imperial Bank for a loan, it is only R.D. he took with him.

Padshah ascribed Dorabji's crankiness to 'constitution'. By nature Sir Dorabji—gleaning from Padshah's letters— worried himself beyond measure on the slightest issue—and he had many big ones to carry as well. He developed diabetes. Meherbai's nephew, Jamshed Bhabha (founder of the National Centre for the Performing Arts), says that while others could eat a hearty meal the diabetics in those days were served a very restricted diet and he would get a piece of toast with fish only. For example, once at a hotel in Europe while dining with three others—who were enjoying their meal—the waiter asked him twice, 'May I take your plate, sir' (it was empty). Dorabji said 'No.' The third time the waiter asked Sir Dorabji replied, 'Don't you see I have still to eat the plate!'

It is R.D. who cultivated the friendship of Motilal Nehru, M.A. Jinnah and other leaders during the Central Assembly debate in 1924 on giving protection of tariffs to TISCO and against dumping of foreign steel. It is because of the pressure exerted by Motilal Nehru and others that the government went against British trade interests exporting the dumped steel. The move saved TISCO. Motilal Nehru in a letter to Mahatma Gandhi called R.D. 'one of the straightest and most charming men I have ever met'.

R.D.'s eldest son, Jehangir, had a place reserved in Cambridge. He was still to finish his studies when R.D. suddenly summoned his son to India from Europe. It must have been a premonition. Nine months later, while he was in France, R.D. suddenly died of a heart attack. Meanwhile Jehangir (JRD) had been adequately placed by R.D. under an ex-I.C.S. officer, John Peterson, from whom, JRD said, he learnt the ways of business.‡ JRD, like Jamsetji, was later to bring further lustre

to the House of Tatas.

Tatas may not have been the same today had Dorabji and RD not held together.

*

Few men were more valuable to Jamsetji for his projects than Burjorji Padshah. And few he felt closer to.

Padshah was born in Bombay in 1864. Jamsetji's only daughter was married to him as a child, as was the custom. She tragically died of an illness at the age of 10.

Burjorji's father and Jamsetji were good friends. When Burjorji's father died at an early age, Jamsetji became the guardian of the family. Burjorji Padshah was brilliant at school and was ready for matriculation at the age of thirteen. As he was underage he spent his time in his father's stables until he could pass out of school at sixteen. He entered Elphinstone College. In a first-class academic career he won the Gibbs Prize for Physics, the Ellis Scholarship in English, the James Taylor Prize in History and the Cobden Medal in Economics. He proceeded to England to study Mathematics at Cambridge.

From Cambridge he went to Karachi as vice principal of the Sind Arts College. Jamsetji was so impressed with him he sent his son, Ratan, to study there. Padshah resigned when a new principal from England was given the post and he—an Indian—was by-passed. His desire for social service made him want to join Gokhale's Servants of India Society. It was 1894. Just then Jamsetji was thinking of his scheme for a university of research. He was looking for a model. It was an age of slow communication and little knowledge was available in print. Jamsetji persuaded him that instead of joining the Servants of India Society if he could help him in his investigations for a grand institute of research his contribution to India would be far greater. Padshah acceded to his guardian's request, toured the leading universities of England and America and recommended Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore as the model.

Thereafter there was no stopping Padshah. He played a part in every major project of Jamsetji and was Jamsetji's main statistician and aide. It was he who saw through with Dorab the steel and hydro-electric projects as well as the Indian Institute of Science.

A letter from Sir Dorabji in London to Burjorji Padshah, 11 August 1905, after Jamsetji's death, reveals how both Sir Dorabji and R.D. valued Padshah's presence—Dorabji in London and R.D. Tata in

Bombay. Dorabji Tata wrote to Burjorji from London: 'It now comes to this that unless Burjorji is in Bombay, Ruttonjee (R.D. Tata) cannot get on, and unless he is in London, Dorabjee cannot get on.'

Dorabjee goes on to blame Padshah for pushing him into the iron and water power (hydro) schemes: 'It is you who have been the cause of all these worries. Without you neither of these schemes would have made any progress and would have been dropped at an early stage.'

Dorab's position was not enviable. He had on his hands not only the three great unfinished projects of Jamsetji but also the Taj that had just started. He had an office but little organization worth the name in London save agents called Lyon & Co. Except for cables, other means of communication were painfully slow—a letter from England and a reply meant one month lost.

This letter of Dorab also shows his efforts at scouting for staff for the Taj. He notes in the letter: 'Jamsetji was a man ten times stronger and it killed him in the end. A year or two of this kind of thing would kill me straight off, and I do not think the game is worth the candle.'

Burjorji was the supreme optimist and went along uttering his favourite expression, 'Hope reigns supreme in the human breast.'

His statistical abilities at a time when numbers were difficult to collect enabled Tatas to work out vital government support needed for the steel project. He visited sites in the Western Ghats to explore where the lake should be situated for the hydro-electric project. His energy enabled him to explore even tracks where the pipeline was to be laid with the project engineer, David Gostling.

We can glean from a letter written by Shapurji Saklatvala (later Sir) to Burjorji from London on 16 November 1905 that: 'D (Dorab) feels a little bit that he receives no thankful acknowledgement for the hard work he is doing. He is sacrificing his health, instead of taking rest and cure in Europe he was drudged [he perhaps means 'used as a drudge'], today he is much worse than what he was, and it is all for Water Power, Hotel and Iron. He once told me he could never describe fully how much he had done for the Hotel in a letter, still he had attempted to give Bombay an idea of it, and he never heard a word in reply . . .'

An indication is given by Shapurji Saklatvala in the same letter as to who Dorab feels unappreciated by. Shapurji says to Burjorji: 'It will be delightful thing if RJ (Dorab's brother) could be induced to write a private and brotherly letter to him thanking him very much for all that he has done, hoping he will soon find time for rest and recoupment of health, and undertaking to relieve him of some part of

the work even in Europe (as soon as R) arrives here.'

One can only conclude that Dorab had taken on the three big schemes of Jamsetji and teething troubles of Taj after it opened, such as finding the right management staff. His brother Ratan had taken on the development projects of Jamsetji in Bombay. Probably Ratan in turn felt left in the cold because Dorab and his other colleagues who worked with Jamsetji, were all set on attaining Jamsetji's national strategy and none was interested in the grand Bombay projects.

Next year Burjorji Padshah was in London writing to R.D. Tata. On 21 June 1906 he wrote: 'Your cousins are not without ambition to do useful things in and for our country. What they need is persistence with ideas which are not lightly embraced and are not lightly relinquished . . . as long as I am associated with you, I shall provide the element of persistency, though I shall contribute nothing else.' That was modest. For he contributed a great deal.

Two decades prior to the start of the Tata Oil Mills, Jamsetji had asked Padshah to conduct the first investigations to set up an experimental plant for extraction of oil from seeds![§] Padshah was an idealist but with a very practical approach. During World War I he appealed to employees of Tata Steel to subscribe to War Loans. 'I am a pacifist,' he said, 'but when it is a question between helping to kill the enemy, and by abstention from military measures helping to kill your kith and kin, the choice is clear.'

P.N. Bose, who introduced Mayurbhanj to Tatas, says of Padshah in the *TISCO Review:* 'The first time he came to Baripada (capital of Mayurbhanj state) I sent a carriage for him to the railway station. But, to my surprise, I saw him trudging on, the carriage following behind. I was burning with curiosity to know the reason of this strange phenomenon, when Mr Padshah explained, that he walked because he did not want to give the horses the trouble of carrying him. Another evidence of Mr Padshah's Ahimsa was found in his shoes which were devoid of even a shred of leather. Fortunately his activities were confined to the town. I do not think he could have worked in the jungles if he extended to elephants the tenderness he showed to the horse and the cow. Being highly cultured [Padshah that is], I had a very happy time with him at Baripada.'

Padshah was a pacifist, an ascetic, an idealist. Throughout his life he exerted a moral influence on the directors of Tatas. His memory was phenomenal as was his knowledge of poetry, politics and business. It was Jamsetji's vision for India that gripped his imagination and he was loyal to his chief unto the last—decades after

Jamsetji was no more. He died in 1941.

The Board of the Tata Iron and Steel Company in its resolution on his death recorded:

> From the very inception of the idea of manufacturing steel in India, Mr Padshah had collaborated first with Mr J.N. Tata and then with his sons and it is largely to his vision, foresight and patient industry that the Tata Iron & Steel Company owes its foundation and its growth. Mr Padshah's was a striking example of a life selflessly devoted to the pursuit of duty and of the highest humanitarian ideals.¶

In his foreword to F.R. Harris's chronicle of J.N. Tata's life, Sir Stanley Reed says: 'He (Jamsetji) died before any of the three schemes had reached fruition. But one of the surest means of deciding whether any man is entitled to that rare appellation "great" as distinguished from just successful, is his power of selecting the right colleagues and of inspiring them with a kindred purpose.'

# 26

# The Shaping of Jamsetji Tata

*Purpose is a stable and generalized intention to accomplish something both meaningful to self and of consequence to the world beyond self.*

—William Damon in *Noble Purpose*

What were the influences that shaped the character of Jamsetji and what were the characteristics that singled out a man like him?

His first thirteen years were spent amidst the priestly circle of the Navsari Parsis. He went through the Navar ceremony (usually between ages 7 and 9) which entitled him to say Zoroastrian prayers at weddings, funerals and the sacred thread ceremony—the navjot.

In later years he showed little interest in rituals. When a painting of his holding a prayer book in hand was shown to his sister she is reported to have laughed. She had never seen her brother in that position. 'A letter in his hand, yes. A prayer book, no.'

The teachings of Zarathustra were deeply imbibed by him, however. He adopted the essence of that faith, Humata, Hukta, Huvarsta—Good thoughts, good words, good deeds—in his work. The form was not important. The substance was. There is a record of his inaugurating the Tata Agiary (fire-temple) at Bandra in 1884 built by his father in memory of his mother, Jivanbai. It seems that his father (who died a year later) was indisposed for the occasion. Jamsetji read out the Anjuman Patra authorizing the fire-temple.

The booksellers Taraporevala & Co had a standing order from him to send every book published on the Zoroastrian faith whatever the language be. He had a collection of 300 such books which, his estate agent, Jamshedji Saklatvala, records, he wanted to bequeath to the K.R. Cama Institute.

Saklatvala, who was his estate agent from 1899 to 1904, records in a footnote in his unpublished 'Some Sidelights and Reminiscences of Mr J.N. Tata' that in Sanjan, South Gujarat, where the Parsis first landed 1400 years earlier, Jamsetji believed 'some buried treasure or

some remarkable relics of our Zorastrian religion will one day come to be unearthed'.

Jamsetji was proved right a century later. In 2002-03, the Archaeological Survey of India made two separate excavations and found artefacts such as shards of pottery, ceramics, silver coins and glassware. The pottery and the silverware are distinctly of Sassanian dynasty that ruled Iran 2000 years ago. The find established the link between Sanjan and Iran corroborating the theory that the arrival of the Parsis there was not accidental but a result of the earlier links with India.

Jamsetji's contemporaries like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, himself an alumnus of Elphinstone, which in his time was headed by an outstanding educationist, Sir Alexander Grant, believed that his education had much to do with Jamsetji's later success. Sir Pherozeshah felt the character and principles he acquired at the Elphinstone 'were the character and the principles which he carried into practice throughout the whole of his long and distinguished life'.

The teachers at the Elphinstone Institute not only informed but aroused curiosity and awakened young minds to make their own studies and discoveries through life. For example, Jamsetji, though he was taught liberal arts, came to learn botany and horticulture. Just preceding him was K.R. Cama who also was an expert on the subject of botany and horticulture apart from Avesta studies.

The next significant influence on him was the four years he spent in Britain.

As noted earlier the second half of the nineteenth century was called by Winston Churchill 'an age of British splendour and unchallenged leadership'. It was in this setting that Jamsetji spent his impressionable years.

At twenty-five, at the start of his career, like all young men Jamsetji wanted to prove himself but he was in no tearing hurry. It is hard to imagine a young man of today taking almost four years off in a foreign land—even if it be the most powerful nation of that time—neither going to college nor having a regular job but educating himself, observing and absorbing for his future career. Jamsetji did just that in England from 1864 to 1868. He let the winds of Western thought, ideas and literature influence him at the same time keeping in touch with his countrymen who were either settled or studying there, like Dadabhai Naoroji and Pherozeshah Mehta.

He was influenced by the current of liberal thought then flourishing

in England through great figures like Cobden and Bright who also influenced the thinking of William Gladstone, later four times Prime Minister of England. Gladstone was to become Jamsetji's hero. He had the privilege of meeting him once on a railway journey.

In Lancashire he also studied about the working of the textile industry.

Liberal thought both shaped him as well as reflected his own deep conviction. It is shown in his respect for the British sense of justice and his sharp reaction whenever he found this absent, as in the case of cotton duties.

There was a powerful movement for temperance in England and Europe. At that time in Sweden workers were not paid in money but in drink. He had no doubt witnessed in Lancashire many among the working classes ruined by drink and throughout his life he had a strong aversion to alcohol. Only once when he nearly fainted at Empress Mills in the 1880s did he sip brandy.

In a speech delivered on the birth centenary of Jamsetji, 3 March 1939, one of his nephews gave intimate glimpses of his uncle: 'J.N. Tata had eight nephews, and I, as one of the three surviving nephews have many personal recollections, which I treasure, of this Grand Old Man. To me the most striking quality in his character was his simplicity.

'He was utterly unassuming. For all his great wealth, J.N. Tata was among the most unostentatious of men. He dressed simply, and his only indulgence was his perfectly appointed brougham; in his fine horses and their equipment he took genuine pride. An occasional game of "Chowpat" at his club was his sole recreation.'

He was a clubable man who gave and absorbed from other people. Even when he went on brief visits to Panchgani, in the evenings he would meet his friends in a shop opposite to the present state bus terminus. Burjor Billimoria, former principal of Billimoria High School there, recalls his father telling him that Jamsetji was 'a very hearty fellow cracking jokes'. Sir Dinshaw Wacha also records about his sense of humour. Jamsetji never went about as a man who was too wise or too good, though his family appears to have held him in awe and respect. Chief Justice Sir Lawrence Jenkins said, 'In his private life he was the sincerest of friends, while his wide experiences made him the most delightful of companions.'

He was far from being the sybarite which his great wealth might have tempted him to become. For luxury, he had no use.

Another relative wrote of him:

> Direct in his manner and speech, he hated cant; anything savouring of the shoddy and insincere, he abhorred. He was widely travelled and personally I have rarely known a more interesting conversationalist. His mind moved over a vast range of interests and it was instructive to note the many practical lessons he drew from what he saw. I always marvelled at his acute observation. Nothing perhaps was more remarkable about him than his endless thirst for knowledge and the passion for studying every detail of a problem which absorbed him. Yet it is typical of his finely balanced nature that his obsession with details never prevented him from conceiving projects on a magnificent, even grandiose scale.

Apart from a fertile mind he had the advantage of a strong constitution and of wealth. He boasted about the former. All contemporaries agreed on how wealth did not spoil him.

Wealth to him was always a means to an end and not an end in itself. This attitude liberated him from avariciousness allowing his creativity to flow on all fronts— especially in nation-building activities. His wealth enabled him to execute some of his plans for India.

Having established himself financially, by the age of fifty he was thinking of what he could give to the country. The motivation of his great schemes, J.R.D. Tata noted, is at least as important as the schemes themselves.

And what were the other advantages Jamsetji had which enabled him to accomplish all he did in one lifetime?

His knowledge-base and memory: he could study the art of silk making in Japan with the same ease and thoroughness as he could the science of steel making and its ramifications in the USA. C.M. Weld spoke of how Jamsetji 'was always interested, patient and persistent'. The impact on him of his foreign travels is not to be underestimated. Those were times of leisure on steamships where you met and interacted with people from all over the world. It is said he was probably the most widely travelled man of his time. As stated earlier an American researcher calculated that in forty-five years of his working life he spent fifteen years abroad!

His disciplined habit of reading and contemplation at set times of the day. This he did late morning and after dinner, when his own family would be hesitant to disturb him in his library. There, comfortably seated in an armchair, he envisaged his plans for India's future. He took the time to think and made space for it in his daily routine.

He never mistook activity for 'achievement' which many tend to do. Where necessary—as in 1902—he could command great speed. There

was deliberation behind his actions and a bigger purpose. F.R. Harris notes that he kept his hand lightly on the pulse of business so that when the occasion came for a new venture he could move in with great energy.

His attitude to people. As noted earlier, Norman Redford, who went on drives in Jamsetji's carriage, said: 'Never did I see him impatient, intolerant or critical of another's shortcomings.' So much of the creative energy of most people goes in judging and blaming others. Jamsetji was more interested in what he had to do than in what others did. He could reach out and understand why others behaved as they did but did not dwell on it. For example, when the delegation was crestfallen after the first meeting with Lord Curzon, Jamsetji said: 'His Excellency made a very cautious reply and many of our friends thought he was throwing cold water on the scheme. But I do not think there is reason to be discouraged. Lord Curzon was quite new to the country and naturally before paying close attention to the question he did not like to commit himself.'

Redford says he 'was always ready to see the better side of the person. Many have been the occasions when I heard him say, "well, well, surely there must be some good in him somewhere."'

He thought things out for himself and did not flow with the tide. For example, his philanthropy was widespread but more important he had a target of 'constructive philanthropy' as well that would be massively supported to change the course of things. Also its management. His colleague Padshah wrote: 'He was of the opinion that service to the needy could no more be made without brains, without investigation, without the selection of right men, without concentration on particular aspects, than the production of any species of goods.'* Sir Pherozeshah Mehta related that Jamsetji often said that the adage Charity begins at home was most imperfect—'Charity may begin at home but it does not end there' He lived his industrial life at a time of the worst possible exploitation of labour. He gave undreamt of facilites to his workers and staff as the Empress adventure demonstrates. For him man was not meant as a tool of industry. Industry was meant for the good of man.

He could not only envisage and execute grand schemes: he always thought of individuals and cared for them. The will of Jamsetji Tata reproduced in Appendix I gives such an insight into the man. After preliminary legacies to relatives, he thinks of 'my earliest childhood playmate' for a legacy. Next he thinks of his Mehtajee or Gujarati teacher.

About half the Will is devoted to his most important benefaction, the 'indigenous University'—the university of research—to which he leaves the largest single sum and again in clause 13 from 'the rest, residue and remainder of my property' one equal third to his two sons and an equal third for the university scheme, virtually putting the university alongside his two dear sons.

But though he thinks on a broad national scale preceding it in clause 8 he does not forget those who have served him in various capacities:

> I give to all my domestic servants whether Coachmen, Grooms, Malees, Massals, Hamals, Cooks, Waiters, Sepoys, Watchmen or the like employed at Esplanade House my residence in Bombay and at my town house and my country seat at Nowsari and my bungalow Castle Hill at Matheran including my two old servants Gungaram Narayen and Babajee Kristnajee now serving at my stone quarries at Chichpoogly one month's pay for every year or part of a year they shall respectively have been in my service at the time of my death the month's pay above referred to being taken to be the average monthly pay for the last three years of such service of each of the said servants.

Noteworthy too that he had not forgotten two former domestic servants transferred by him to his quarries and gave them the same privilege as they would have had were they in his domestic service.

He did not just live and think and plan for India in the abstract. He thought of India in terms of people. Individuals mattered to him, not just his grand schemes. His was a rounded personality. Meherbai, his daughter-in-law, was being shown round his palatial house. They moved from one stately room to another—each room with an attendant. In one room the attendant wished Jamsetji but did not rise from his chair. As they left the room Meherbai commented on the servant's lack of respect. Jamsetji replied: 'He has served me well. Now he is old. I have instructed him not to rise when I enter the room.'

And, finally, that rare quality of passion for a cause. The consciousness of his own wealth in the surrounding sea of poverty abided with him and with it came not just a desire but what the *Times of India* called 'an abiding passion' to elevate his land and his people to a higher standard of life. In the last ten years it became a mission with him.

A religious missionary in south India, Amy Wilson Carmichael, wrote verses which—with appropriate changes— could well apply to Jamsetji of later years:

O for a passionate passion for souls,

O for a pity that yearns,

O for a love that loves unto death,

O for a fire that burns.

Jamsetji's passion was for the physical well-being of his countrymen. As noted, his eyes welled with tears when he spoke of the poverty of his people. He realized that agriculture was not adequate to relieve the poverty and hence industry and technical education were needed. His pity and concern manifested itself when he refused to start a subsidiary for crushing cotton seeds lest the cattle of the poor be starved, or when he resisted the campaign that cotton duties be also charged to handloom as to mill cloth, because he did not want the load on the poor worker.

On his astounding visit to the West (in the chapter that follows) of 1902 he literally burnt himself out. Next year, the doctors were to write that at sixty-four his hair had greyed all over. He died at sixty-five much before his time. But he did leave behind him a legacy of what one man could do for the land that gave him birth.

# 27

# 1902—The Crescendo

The year 1902 was the year of miracles in the life of Jamsetji. Between 17 May when he landed at Trieste en route to England and the USA and early December when he sailed from Trieste to Bombay, he had:

—Seen the secretary of state for India to advance all three of his major projects—steel, hydro-electric and the university of research. At first he appeared more successful in the first two than in the last. But a few months later, in March 1903, Lord Hamilton spoke about the university scheme in Parliament and it was brought out from cold storage into the public eye.

—Visited the US twice to see the major steel towns of America to study their processes and scout for the experts he needed for his proposed steel plant.

—Visited the Niagara Falls and studied the generation of power. Earlier he had a meeting with Westinghouse at his residence 'Solitude'.

—Purchased with the electrical engineer of the future Taj Mahal Palace Hotel all the electrical machinery required from Germany.

—Participated in the Industrial Exhibition at Dusseldorf.

—Attended a conference of British iron masters.

—Blessed the controversial marriage of his cousin and partner, R.D. Tata, to Suzanne Briere, and invited them to a gathering of 100 Parsis he hosted on the Parsi New Year Day.

How he found the strength and energy for all that with his failing health is somewhat of a mystery. There was no evidence that any of his colleagues were with him. It is possible he was accompanied by a servant to assist with his travels and cook for him when he desired. On a much earlier occasion, when he had visited St Petersburg, the governor of Bombay had given a letter requesting facilities for travel though all countries 'to Jamsetji Tata and a Parsi servant'. He kept his

grip on the steel project till his illness in 1903. On 5 May 1903, writing to an English official, Sir Walter, Burjorji Padshah notes: 'Mr J.N. Tata is now after the disposal of various pending questions—such as the Research Institute and the Hotel he is erecting on the Apollo Bunder—in a position to give almost undivided attention to the matter of iron and steel in India. Mr Tata has kindly put me in a position to get a general view of financial and statistical aspects of the enterprise.'

During the journey he wrote several long letters to Dorab and had the suspense of not knowing how his ailing wife was in Bombay. Dorab sent a seven-page letter to his father, 25 September 1902, beginning with 'My dear father' and ending 'Yours very affectionately, Dorab'. He dealt at length with various issues and plans which indicate that what we see finally fructified is just a fraction of what Tatas were attempting—in Hyderabad State and elsewhere. In the final paragraph Dorab says of his mother: 'That her general health is still what it was, but she has again taken to moaning which was one of the early symptoms in Bombay. For two or three days she is well and then she has an attack of this kind for a day or two.' Dorab also says that Ratan and his wife Navajbai went to Poona to stay with their mother.

Jamsetji was very particular that on his travels abroad every mail steamer from India had a detailed report from Dorab on developments on various fronts. On one occasion he reprimanded Dorab for saying he was too busy on the last day to give a report. In that case, Jamsetji wrote back, you should write in good time and not wait till the last day.

The appointment with Lord Hamilton was a god-sent. The whole of summer Jamsetji was told Hamilton was too busy with the coronation preparations for the future monarch Edward VII and then Hamilton went to the countryside for a holiday. Undeterred, Jamsetji persisted with Richmond Ritchie for an appointment upon his return from America. He wrote to Dorab on Hamilton: 'The best thing to do is to wait till he is more free and has plenty of leisure and then have a long comprehensive interview with him.' He had strong enough nerves to wait till he got an interview the way he wanted and not settle for just a courtesy call.

He did get an appointment on his terms, when Hamilton had 'the leisure' to cover in depth all his three major projects, as he had desired.

In early May 1902 he had sailed from Bombay by the Austrian liner *Imperatrix* for Trieste. He preferred the Austrian company to the P & O

as their service was better. On 17 May he reached Trieste. He visited R.D. Tata and probably met his future bride in Paris en route to London. In London he had a quiet dinner with Sir William Ramsay to discuss the university project.

In August he went on a short holiday to Carlsbad and after that to the industrial exhibition at Dusseldorf. He noted there Germany's rapid advance through the application of science to industry, which was one of the objectives of his university scheme. He wrote to Dorab: 'We are all surprised at the superiority and cheapness of all German machines and articles as compared to English.' Here he shopped for his hotel project—the electrical lights, generators, lifts and engines came from Dusseldorf. For chandeliers he went to Berlin.

Jamsetji loved to entertain. Fresh from Germany he decided to give a dinner to all Parsis of London, 100 in number, on Parsi New Year's Day (Navroz). He wanted them to appreciate the beauty of a cruise up the Thames and arranged for a launch for a four-hour journey to Kingston-on-Thames. It was for all of them a memorable occasion. They could admire 'the beauty of the Thames valley . . . Kew, Hampton Court were seen with advantage in the subdued light with the first touch of autumn on tree and shrub.' The occasion was reported in two full columns in *The Times of India* (6 October 1902). The report says the party left Westminster Pier at 2 p.m. The saloon was well provided with refreshments. On landing visitors were free to stroll or move to Rosebury Hall, a restaurant reserved for the party.

After dinner at 7 p.m. they returned by a fast train to Waterloo Station, reaching by 10.35 p.m. Among the guests were Dadabhai Naoroji with his family, Sir Muncherjee Bhownagree—the only Indian till then to be re-elected to the House of Commons. Unlike Dadabhai of the Liberal Party, the first Indian MP, Sir Muncherjee, was a Conservative.

The evening began with prayers and blessings from the Avesta duly translated into English for the benefit of the Parsis as well as the few English guests present like Sir George Birdwood, Jamsetji's old friend. The blessing ran as follows:

'May pure happiness—happiness which is essential for life—be ever with you . . . May the year be prosperous, the day fortunate, the month happy! Live for many years in divine prayers and charity.'

To take the toast there 'were wines of 1820, champagne 1870 . . .' A band played in the adjoining room. Jamsetji was delighted at the enjoyment of his guests and was quick to dismiss the thanks of his friends.

Sir Muncherjee Bhownagree thanking Jamsetji for his liberality spoke in glowing terms about his contribution 'to many walks of life—educational, industrial, moral'. He offered assistance to his countrymen which he (Sir Muncherjee) considered unrivalled. He added that Jamsetji had followed 'in the footsteps of his dear old father whom to know was to love'.

It was some time before Jamsetji got his turn. Jamsetji, who disliked giving—though not listening to—public speeches, asked his guests to drink to each other. Jamsetji said Sir Muncherjee was almost like one of his family and each was close to the other's father. 'Hence his (Sir M's) remarks had been unduly complimentary to him (Jamsetji) and had savoured of flattery (Loud cries, "No, No").' However, he accepted the kindly sentiments expressed and thanked his guests for accepting his invitation.

Prolonged cheering greeted Dadabhai Naoroji as he rose to speak. He graciously thanked Mr Tata and said in all his memory (he had been fifty years in England with visits to India) he had never witnessed such a memorable occasion.

It was obviously a very happy occasion for Jamsetji and a break from his busy work schedule.

On 24 September he left for the USA on a short visit where he got considerable publicity, some based on truth, the rest on the imagination of the writers. He was acquainted with John W. Foster, former secretary of state, with whom he dined. He was preparing the ground for a further visit soon by him. For example, who to appoint for the exploration of his steel project and the building of it. He was moving into territory uncharted by any Indian.

On 26 October he was back in the USA for a longer visit tying up the key people like Perin for the steel project and visiting the steel plants. He returned to London on 25 November. In the four days he was in London he managed to have the meeting with Lord Hamilton before rushing off to Germany to conclude the contract for electrical lighting to make Taj the first large building to be fully lit by electricity —and what a building! In the beginning of December he left for Bombay from Trieste. Two days after landing, he took the train to Delhi for the Imperial Coronation Durbar held by Lord Curzon. As Curzon had not invited Jamsetji as an official guest he went in his private capacity. Lovat Fraser met him in the amphitheatre clad in his simple white dress and Parsi headgear. He wrote: 'There is something lacking in the method of selection which omitted India's most prominent men from the list of official guests.'

On his return to Bombay by 24 December he was shooting off comprehensive letters and notes on his projects to Hamilton. The impact of his meeting with Hamilton on the university project was not apparent at first but in May 1903 the Government of India announced their willingness to make a grant of 2000 pounds sterling a year to the project. The project was kept in abeyance but under pressure from Hamilton it was revived, though on Curzon's terms, which were not acceptable to Jamsetji. Jamsetji stood his ground that the government should contribute at least as much as he did. It did not happen till after he died.

On the hydro-electric scheme, Hamilton gave his full backing and sent the entire correspondence with Jamsetji to Lord Northcote, the governor, who became a firm supporter of the project, as did Lord Sydenham, his successor.

This 1902 journey of almost eight months made the task of his successors easier. Jamsetji had ploughed the hard earth and sowed with zeal. His successors were to reap the harvest.

How many of us can expect even one of our dreams to be realized after we are no more? In Jamsetji's case, all three great schemes were realized. He was fortunate in his sons and colleagues who pursued his grand projects to fruition. Later correspondence between his sons Dorab and Burjorji Padshah show what a strain they were under to fulfil Jamsetji's projects, but they did it.

What was the secret of the man?

One was that his vision was so grand that those who shared it were ennobled in turn. They shared the burden and the struggle and later the glory in accomplishing it.

The other reason lay in the men Jamsetji built and the way he was sensitive to their feelings. He put a lot into people (like R.D. Tata) and not only into his projects. The power of his personality and the dignity of his demeanour had a great deal to do with the impact he made on men like Lord Hamilton. On 25 June 1920, sixteen years after he was no more, Lord Hamilton was to write to Dorab:

> It was by solid work such as your father did that India will be brought up to a higher standard of comfort and civilisation, and as that higher standard develops, so will the capacity for self-restraint and self-government increase. I, therefore, look upon your father and the group of men who are following in his footsteps, not merely from the commercial standpoint, but as political pioneers of the most reliable character.

# 28

# The Last Journey

In 1903 Jamsetji witnessed the first signs of the labours of his foreign trip of the previous year bearing fruit. Jamsetji arrived in December 1902 and a month later C.M. Weld (sent by Charles Perin Page) arrived and promptly joined Dorab and Shapurji Saklatvala.* To the delight of Jamsetji the iron ore and coke for the steel project was being explored with the best expertise the world had to offer.

The year also witnessed the deterioration of his health. The bill of his exertions was coming in. When he had energy, he was prodigal in the use of it. As noted earlier, two days after landing in Bombay from Trieste by ship he took the train to Delhi for the Coronation Durbar. All this strain including travels in Europe and USA was telling on him.

The one sad thing about his life was that in the later years he seemed to have no real companion whose advice he would respect or abide by. Perhaps Dorab and/or Meherbai advised him not to go to Delhi. If they had done so, he did not heed them. Apart from a letter or two from him there is little record of his activities in 1903, save a letter to Dadabhai Naoroji in March and an item in the *Athornan Namu* that in May the Government of India had written to the director-general of ordnance at Cossipur saying if Mr Tata wanted to visit the factory to know what kind of material was used in cannons, they had no objection. He was still struggling on all fronts. Jamsetji put in an advertisement in the *Pioneer* newspaper of Lucknow in May 1903 'advising that he would give some seeds of "Peruvian" cotton to be cultivated on an experimental basis by farmers who request him'. Soon there were consultations with doctors in India and also Europe.

Come the latter part of 1903 and beginning of 1904, the medical reports mount up. 'Drowsy during the day and sleepless at nights . . . He has always enjoyed good digestion and so was never careful about his diet. At present he looks pale and flabby and has a tendency to adiposity. He is 64 years of age and has grey hair all over . . . The

abdomen is distended . . . The palms of the hand unusually anemic and there is feeble circulation on pressing the finger nail.' The doctor also noted the 'swelling in the legs and dyspepsia and fatty infiltration of the heart. Pulse normal.'

The doctor, Lt. Col. D.R. Parakh, IMS (retired) gave this verdict on 30 November 1903 and prescribed 'a long sea voyage and stay in a bracing and equable climate like South of France, the Riviera'. Nine days later the physician to J.J. Hospital gives his verdict. These reports were sent by his trusted physician, Dr Row, to experts abroad to elicit their opinion.

A Professor of the Faculty of Medicine in France suggested a visit to a 'Thermal Station' (a spa). There are other opinions from Harley Street, Paris and Vienna. Vienna was the Mecca of medicine in those days. Some doctors sent prescriptions too.

A rich and spicy diet was taking its toll. With age he had become more remote and awe-inspiring, his stubbornness to eat what he liked knew no limit. 'I think I could digest a stone,' he could once boast. He overestimated his capacity for digestion. Fatty degeneration of his heart was steadily growing. He was suffering from shortness of breath and climbed with difficulty the steps of the Elphinstone Club in the evenings. Dorab suggested he be taken up by chair. He thought that was being 'fussy' and molly-coddled. Finally after much persuasion he accepted that a chair be placed on each landing for him to rest and proceed.

His family was obviously in touch with his doctors in Vienna and were keen to take him to Europe. Jamsetji had other plans. 'I want to go to Persian Gulf.' He also had, for some reason, Burma in mind. It seemed impossible to shift him. So R.D. Tata, of whom he was very fond, tried a ruse. Dorab and Meherbai were by now in Cairo. R.D. said he himself was unwell and wanted to get away to Egypt, inviting Jamsetji to accompany him. What he refused to do for himself, he agreed to do for R.D. Jamsetji accompanied by R.D. and with Jamsetji's Goan cook Abel, set sail for Suez. Dorab and Meherbai were there to receive him. Whatever excuse R.D. gave is not known, but six hours after landing R.D. managed to wriggle out and catch a ship back to India!

Stubborn he always was but at this critical stage what made Jamsetji conduct himself in this fashion? Was it first his ill-health and the frustration that can accompany it? Or was it that as he grew in stature he became more remote, awesome? Did he have no friends like Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, who once used to visit him every week, to

come and advise him as his peer? Clubable as he once was, did he have no real friends whom he felt close to? Elsewhere in the book is his letter of February 1900 to Bezonji Mehta expressing his anger at his colleagues refusing to part with commission for the university of his dreams. Was that churning in him?

At Cairo Jamsetji began to feel better. Trade in the Levant occupied his mind. Sometimes he heeded the advice of Meherbai—but only sometimes. His acts of dietary indiscretion continued. He had refused to take his doctor with him on the voyage, possibly because he wanted Dr Row to attend to his ailing wife. Dr Row's eight-page handwritten note covering Jamsetji's treatment in all possible eventualities is still in existence. From Egypt the family arranged for Dr Row to come to Alexandria and together set sail for Naples.

Jamsetji's consultant, Dr Northagel, was in Vienna. As February was too cold he suggested he would see Jamsetji later at San Remo, Italy. There news came that his wife had had a paralytic stroke and had passed away. Jamsetji was shaken but managed to recover his composure. He seems to have realized time was also running out for him. He wrote to Ratan's wife, Navajbai, committing to her care his invalid sister and two of his nieces. He asked that in his wife's memory Ratan start a fund for midwives at Navsari with Rs. 25,000. Then, in leisurely stages via Rome, Florence and Genoa they arrived in San Remo as spring began.

At certain times his mind was clear and sharp as ever. At San Remo, also at their hotel was Sir George King, former curator of the Botanical Gardens at Calcutta, and author of a monograph on Indian plants. He requested to see Jamsetji. As he came out after their talk, he told Dorab: 'I am surprised at the marvellous information your father has on all things connected with what I thought was my line. Though I am a botanist, I learned several things from him.'

Sometimes he looked forward to life. He was bright and brilliant at conversation with those he met. He was even hoping to give a party to all the Parsis in London as he had on Pateti Day 1902. At other times he was dull. When he was bright he was uncontrollable and stubborn. One fine day with his cook Abel he went to the market and had a sumptuous helping of fruits, in which Abel merrily joined, and they brought some home. Mediterranean dates fascinated him for growing in India and he considered palms of that climate worth tapping for toddy. He brought scores of fruit trees for his estate at Panchgani and for Navsari. For his Navsari zoo he purchased white peacocks, and a couple of greyhounds whose 'high stepping' action he liked. The Taj

was not to be forgotten. He bought some Bosnian and Croatian horses for the hotel and chose some for his own use. He even ordered two oil-driven motors for a yacht being built in Bombay, probably for the Taj.

As promised, Dr Northagel came down to San Remo. He took a grave view of his condition. Not long after, Jamsetji was ensconced in Dr Northagel's clinic in Vienna. All realized there was little hope of a cure. It was considered that a spa, Bad Nauheim, might be good for the patient and so he and Dr Row left for Germany while Dorab and Meherbai stayed on in Vienna for a minor operation on Dorab. In the second week of May they reached Bad Nauheim. R.D., now in Europe, joined him soon. Jamsetji's nephew, Beram, studying in Berlin, joined him too. So did a Bombay lawyer and friend of the family called Kanga. It was the middle of May. Jamsetji's condition worsened. At times he would slide into a stupor from which he would rouse himself from time to time. He was pining to see his 'dear lads', as he called his sons.

News of the Empress Mills financial results reached him and cheered him. He spoke to R.D. of the aims that had activated his life and repeatedly said his sons and R.D. should carry on the work. R.D. reminded him of the lustre he had brought to the family name. Jamsetji told R.D.: 'If you cannot make it greater at least preserve it. Do not let things slide. Go on doing my work and increasing it, but if you cannot, do not lose what we have already done.' He gave his Patek Philippe gold pocket watch, with his mother's lock of hair in a section at the rear, to R.D.

His last recorded donation, according to *Parsee Prakash,* was on 4 March 1904. It provided Rs. 3000 from Tata companies and Rs. 2000 of his own for the benefit of widows and children of soldiers killed in the Russian-Japanese War.

Jamsetji knew the end was near. More than once he said that death held no terror for him. God, he said, had always been kind to him and he was satisfied in all respects.

On 17 May he cried out for Dorab who was to come from Vienna: 'Where is Dorab? Where is Dorab?' he kept asking. Dorab and his wife were hastening to see him. He was almost comatose when on 18 May Dorab and Meherbai arrived. 'Where were you? Where were you?' he asked Meherbai and gently stroked the face of Dorab.

The following morning he passed away in his sleep. It was 19 May, the anniversary of the death of his hero William Gladstone. The family decided to take the body to England. As embalming a body is against the rites of the Zoroastrian religion, a German doctor prepared a

preservative to be injected in his veins. The body was brought by train to London.

On 24 May, at the Brookwood Cemetery in England, with the Thames flowing gently not far away, the sacred fire was lit and his son Dorab and his relative R.D. recited the ‘geh sarna’ prayers from the Avesta book.† Then among the dark yew trees, Jamsetji’s body was lowered into the grave. Each mourner poured a fistful of earth on him.

The body was laid to rest but as one year yielded to the next, what his restless spirit dreamt of, sprang to life.

—The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, opened its doors in 1911.

—The first ingot of steel rolled out in 1912 at the Tata Iron and Steel plant at Sakchi.

—Hydro-electric power was switched on in Bombay in 1915.

And the light he brought to India is still shining.

# Epilogue

# An Evaluation of J.N. Tata: 1904-2004

*Mr Tata has awakened the cultivated mind of India . . . The richest legacy he has left behind him to his countrymen is this—he has stirred faith in us . . .*

—Justice Chandravarkar at the Bombay Memorial Meeting, 1905

*A man who helped a nation to believe in itself.*

—Azim Premji

*He showed a light in the path of many people like us.*

—Sudha Murty

Jamsetji's untimely death cast a shadow of gloom over the city of his lifelong activity.

How did his contemporaries evaluate him and how is he evaluated a hundred years after his death?

'At his Uthamna (post-funeral ceremony) in Bombay the Vada Dastur (head priest) of Navasari, Darabji Meherji proposed to the athornan (priests) that Seth Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata's name be recited in our public religious ceremonies along with the names of other elders.'* This procedure is still being done a 100 years later.

Condolence meetings were held for Jamsetji Tata in various towns like Navsari, Nagpur and Belgaum.

On 26 December 1904, the twentieth Annual Conference of the Indian National Congress took 'note of his passing away with great sorrow' and spoke of his 'high sense of patriotism and public service rendered'.

Distinguished citizens of Bombay asked the sheriff to summon a meeting. It was held at the Bombay Town Hall on 28 March 1905. The governor, Lord Lamington, presided.

Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Chief Justice of Bombay, moved the resolution:

> This meeting desires to place on record its deep sense of the heavy loss sustained by all India, especially Bombay, in the death of Mr J.N. Tata,

> who throughout his whole busy career was actuated by an earnest desire to do everything in his power to advance the welfare and development of the country in all directions. In all the great industrial enterprises, which he undertook he had this object always in his mind, the greatest manifestation whereof was in his magnificent proposal to found an Institute of Research, to which he has devoted a large share of his immense wealth and which will always remain an undying monument of his patriotism, public spirit, and princely liberality.

Speaking of Jamsetji's success Sir Lawrence said:

> Success was not the mere outcome of fortune's favours, but the symbol of his own qualities, his clear vision, his constancy of purpose, his uprightness and his vigour. Yes, he had a vigour that was contagious, and had its influence on those who assisted him in his various works. Wealth came to him in full measure, but he remained to the last what he was by nature, a simple, modest gentleman, seeking neither title nor place, and loving with a love that knew no bounds the country that gave him birth.

Justice Badruddin Tyabji referring to the research institute said: 'It is not merely the largeness and munificence of his gift which we admire, but it is the originality of the plan which his mind had conceived, and which, we must all regret, he was not able to carry out in his own lifetime . . . Mr Tata's deeds and achievements proved he belonged to both the East and to the West.'

Justice Chandravarkar said 'Mr Tata has awakened the cultivated mind of India . . . The richest legacy he has left behind him to his countrymen, is this—he has stirred faith in us and striven to propagate among us true life in the genuine aspects of loveliness.'

Rev. Dr Mackichan of Wilson College moved a resolution to form a Memorial Committee with Sir Lawrence Jenkins, Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, H.H. the Aga Khan and others.

When it opened in 1912 the memorial was situated opposite the landmark Municipal Building and V.T. Station. Later it was shifted to the Mantralaya garden where he sits in bronze amidst leafy trees, while behind him in the centre of the garden strides a large statue of Mahatma Gandhi, staff in hand. When the proposal was mooted at the memorial meeting in 1905 Lord Lamington had said that no one would have more disliked such a proposal than Jamsetji himself. Inviting the governor, Sir George Clarke, in 1912 to unveil the statue Sir Pherozeshah Mehta said: 'And let me say it is not to honour him that we are raising this statue but we are putting up a beacon light to successful generations of people coming afterwards to exhort and tell them—go thou and do likewise.'

The *Times of India* wrote: 'He was above all a patriot, who made no public speeches. To his mind wealth, and the industry which led to wealth, were not ends in themselves, but means to an end, the stimulation of the latent resources of the country and its elevation in the scale of nations.'

A hundred years after his death Jamsetji is recognized as a man who took India into the industrial age, which it had missed a few decades earlier as a subject nation. The industrial revolution was a leap for mankind. The next major leap was to be the revolution in information technology. F.C. Kohli, who was heading the Tata Consultancy Services, wrote, as far back as in 1975, 'Many years ago, there was an industrial revolution; we missed it for reasons beyond our control. Today there is a new revolution—a revolution in information technology, which required neither mechanical bias nor mechanical temperament. Primarily, it requires the capability to think clearly. This we have in abundance. We have the opportunity to participate in this revolution on an equal basis; we have the opportunity, even, to assume leadership in this revolution. If we miss this opportunity, those who follow us will not forgive us for our tardiness and negligence.' Fifteen years after he uttered those words the world woke up to the IT revolution. Meanwhile Kohli had himself given the lead on Tata's behalf.

The words of Jamsetji of 1897 rang true a century later that given the right opportunity Indians are equal to or better than others. The Tata Consultancy Services, Wipro, Infosys, and other Indian companies put their stamp internationally.

How do a couple of these creators of the IT revolution evaluate the man who almost single-handedly ushered in the industrial revolution?

Azim Premji, chairman of Wipro Limited, says: 'Jamsetji Tata embarked upon setting up a steel manufacturing plant. It heralded a major shift in Indian business from trading into manufacturing. It was an epoch-making event for the entire nation because it signified our first step towards self-reliance in manufacturing. As I look back at this event in our history, to me it appears like a watershed event not just from the context of business and economy, but more importantly, from the perspective of the boost that it gave to the confidence and psyche of the entire nation. I will always remember Jamsetji, not just as a visionary industrialist but as a man who helped a nation believe in itself.'

N.R. Narayana Murthy, chairman, Infosys Technologies Limited, says: 'Jamsetji changed India's industrial and economic character. He

was a visionary far ahead of his time. Most importantly, he was a philanthropist and a nationalist who laid great emphasis on the interests of the nation as well as of the society at large. The Tata Group's pioneering efforts in corporate social responsibility and its ethical corporate governance have, over the years, conditioned the thinking of Indian business. I have no doubt that Jamsetji's visionary leadership laid the foundation for this.'

His wife, Sudha Murty, head of the Infosys Foundation, emphasizes the philanthropic side in her evaluation:

'In my office room I have two photographs, one is Jamsetji in black and white and JRD in blue suit. These are two people whom I respect more than anyone else. I consider Jamsetji Tata was a true Indian. He loved India and her people. He is the best example for the next generation to show how one man can change the lives of many others. I consider him as a pioneer philanthropist in our country. I studied at the Indian Institute of Science, popularly known as the Tata Institute. If such higher education institutes were not there in our country probably people like us would have not studied. I have visited many places where he has helped and wondered how a single man in one life can do so much. Today whatever little philanthropy work I do is thanks to Jamsetji, who showed a light in the path of many people like us.'

And the younger generation?

Kairav Parikh, nineteen, computer student at the Sanghvi Engineering College, Vile Parle, Mumbai, when asked replies: 'Of course he is an icon for the youth.'

'Does he still matter?' he was asked.

'Yes, he does because of the sheer magnitude of the empire that he has built. It is quite awe-inspiring.'

He wanted to know more about Jamsetji's life.

Ronak Sutaria, twenty-five, another young man who works in an American software company in Bangalore, says: 'Having had the privilege to start my career at the Indian Institute of Science there were times when while walking across the main building and seeing the magnificent structure and facing the statue, I would get a thought that what would it have been like to have a vision like Jamsetji Tata's to set up an institute such as this! What he has been able to create is a place which people look up to and respect. This and many other organizations set up by him, I feel, have been the cornerstones of modern India.

'But how did all this get started? It would be wonderful if there was

some insight into the kind of person he was and how was he appreciated by the people around him at that time.

‘At my age many of us have ideas of doing things. What we want to know is how was he able to convert his ideas into practice.’

Sir Pherozeshah Mehta was right in saying the statue was ‘a beacon light for successful generations of people coming afterwards to exhort and tell them—go thou and do likewise.’

Some of them want to.

# Appendix I

# Will of Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata

December 16, 1896.

I Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata of Bombay Parsee inhabitant hereby revoke all Wills Codicils and other Testamentary dispositions heretofore made by me and declare this to be my last Will and Testament.

1. I appoint my sons Dorab Jamsetjee Tata and Ruttonjee Jamsetjee Tata to be the executors and trustees of this my Will.

2. I direct that a sum of not more than Rupees two thousand be expended in and upon my funeral ceremonies.

3. I give a sum of Rupees ten thousand to such Charitable Institutions and Funds in Bombay and elsewhere as after my death my executors shall consider to be in need of help with power to them at their own discretion to devote the said sum to any charitable objects whatever they shall think fit.

4. I give to my executors a sum of Rupees one lac and fifty thousand upon trust to invest the same in or upon securities of the Government of India or Bonds of the Municipality or the Port Trust of Bombay or shares of any of the Railway Companies in India the interest whereof is guaranteed by the Government of India or on the first legal mortgage of immovable property in Bombay insured as to all buildings to the extent of the market value thereof for the time being with power to the trustees from time to time to vary the said investments into others of a like nature and upon trust to pay the periodical income thereof to my wife for the term of her natural life or her own absolute use and benefit but without the power of anticipation and upon the death of my said wife upon trust to incorporate the corpus of the said fund with a certain Trust already existing and made in the name of my late father for the support of the poor relations and friends of the Tata family.

5. I give the following pecuniary legacies:

To my sisters Ruttonbai, Maneckbai, Virbaiji and Jerbai a

sum of Rupees five thousand each, in all Rs. 20,000
To my niece Awabai, wife of Hormusji Edulji Bamji
Rupees ten thousand Rs. 10,000
To my sister Ruttonbai's sons Hormusji Edulji Bamji
and Kaikhushru Edulji Bamji Rupees two thousand
and five hundred each, in all Rs. 5,000
To my sister Virbaiji's sons Kaikobad and Nowroji
Rupees two thousand and five hundred each, in
all Rs. 5,000
To my sister Jerbai's sons Shapurji, Pherozshaw,
Sorabji and Byramji the sum of Rupees two
thousand and five hundred each in all Rs. 10,000
To my wife's sister Cooverbai's daughter Ruttonbai
wife of Hormasji Jamasji Tata Rupees five
thousand Rs. 5,000
To my wife's sister Cooverbai's daughter Bachoobai
Rupees five thousand Rs. 5,000
To Jamsji Nowroji Tata of Nowsari my earliest
Playmate if he be living at my death but if not
then to his widow if any and children in such
shares if more than one as they would take
according to the Parsee Succession Act as if
the amount belonged to himself and he died
intestate in regard to it Rs. 5,000
To my Mehtajee or Gujarati Book-keeper Bhaidas
Itcharam, Rupees five hundred Rs. 500
To my Manager Ardeshir Jamsetji Bilimoria
Rupees five thousand Rs. 5,000

6. I bequeath to my cousin Ruttonji Dadabhoy Tata my watch by Patek Philippe with my monogram engraved upon it.

7. I direct my executors to purchase and with a suitable inscription thereon to present a gold watch worth Rupees five hundred to each of the following:

8. My nephews above-named to whom I have hereinbefore bequeathed pecuniary legacies and to my said Manager Ardeshir Jamsetjee Bilimoria.

9. I give to all my domestic servants whether Coachmen, Grooms, Malees, Massals, Hamals, Cooks, Waiters, Sepoys, Watchmen or the like employed at Esplanade House my residence in Bombay and at my town house and my country seat at Nowsari and my bungalow Castle Hill at Matheran including my two old servants Gungaram Narayen

and Babajee Kristnajee now serving at my stone quarries at Chichpoogly one month's pay for every year or part of a year they shall respectively have been in my service at the time of my death the month's pay above referred to being taken to be the average monthly pay for the last three years of such service of each of the said servants.

10. I declare that I have by two several settlements both bearing date the eighth day of March one thousand eight hundred and eighty nine settled upon trusts for the benefit of myself and my said sons respectively and their issue and otherwise as therein appears immoveable properties shares and other securities which are now of the aggregate estimated value of Rupees thirty lacs or thereabouts and there is every reason to believe that the said Trust property will greatly increase in value and income as time goes and both the said settlements are under the terms thereof respectively revocable at my discretion at any time.

11. I also declare that . . . For the higher education of my coreligionists and have subsequently extended the benefit of it to all capable natives of this country and the said scheme has been now in operation for some years and under it capable youths have been and are being helped by me with money to proceed to England and prosecute certain higher studies in terms of the said scheme and the said scheme is administered by a Managing Committee appointed for that purpose under its Deed of Constitution.

12. I also declare that I have recently formed a project for the foundation of an indigenous University in this city upon as broad as institutions of a like nature which have been founded through the munificence of private gentlemen in Europe and America to the intent that such University may become the means along with similar others of meeting the growing educational and scientific needs of this country and intended to make the following provision for the furtherance of this object namely that, in the event of the said project being brought to the point of realization, I should revoke the two family settlements above referred to and resettle the property and funds released thereby together with an additional sum of Rupees twenty lacs or in case the said scheme for higher education is taken up and administered by or through the intended University an additional sum of Rupees twenty-five lacs out of my private estate in trust as to one moiety of the income thereof for the said University and as to the other moiety in trust as follows, that is to say as to one equal half part of such last mentioned moiety upon the like trusts as far as practicable as are contained in each of the said two family settlements. An outline

sketch of the said project has been already submitted by me to Lord Reay for favour of approval and cooperation . . . and it will be seen therefrom that a sum of Rupees eighty thousand to one hundred thousand per year will be available for the said scheme in the beginning with the certainty of the annual income increasing in future. Now in view of the project last aforesaid I hereby will and declare that if the said project takes effect and I have not in my lifetime made the provision above indicated then and in such case my executors shall pay and make available for the purpose a sum of Rupees twenty or twenty-five lacs as the case may be out of the residue of my property in addition to the property to be released from the trusts of the said two settlements by such revocation as aforesaid and I further will and declare that in case I shall not have revoked the settlements in my life time my executors shall do so for me to the intent aforesaid.

13. I authorise my executors to do all matters and things which in their judgement appear necessary or expedient in connection with the carrying into effect of the said project and to make or concur in making such modifications therein and in the trusts of the family settlements above-mentioned and otherwise provided that the main features of the said project be substantially adhered to and I authorise my executors in case of difficulty to take the opinion and direction of the High Court of Bombay from time to time.

14. I give the rest residue and remainder of my property of what kind and nature soever and wheresoever as to one equal third part thereof to my said son Dorab Jamsetjee Tata absolutely and as to another equal third part thereof to my said son Ruttonji Jamsetji Tata absolutely and as to the remaining one third thereof in trust for the said University scheme.

15. Should I by any misadventure omit to revoke the said Settlements which I only intend to do in case the said project is certain of being carried into execution and should my executors also be reason of any legal difficulty be unable to do so and the said project be thereby jeopardised then I hope and trust that my said sons shall on their own account do all that may be in their power to carry into effect my desire in respect of the said project in its main features, namely, the desired benefaction and a permanent provision for the family. In Witness whereof I the said Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata have hereunto set my hand at Bombay this sixteenth day of December One thousand eight hundred and ninety-six.

Signed and acknowledged by the Testator Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata as

and for his last Will and Testament in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses

Jamsetji N. Tata

Ardeshir Framjee

Solicitor

Bombay.

Framroze A. Vakil

Solr. B'bay.

**CODICIL:** February 16, 1900.

This is a Codicil to my last Will. Whereas I have given to the Government of India an undertaking to endow the proposed Indian University of Research with immoveable property yielding an annual net income of Rupees one lac and twenty-five thousand; Now I hereby Will and direct that if the said University is brought to the point of realisation after my life-time and I have died without carrying out my said undertaking then and in such case my executors shall, out of my general estate, provide sufficient property or funds for the purpose of fulfilling my said undertaking and I also will and declare that if the Government of India prior to or in view of the necessary legislation and sanction by the Secretary of State for India or otherwise require an undertaking to provide such property or funds as aforesaid when the University is about to be incorporated, then and in such case, my Executors shall give such undertaking so as to bind my estate to carry it out. And I further will and declare that my Executors shall have authority to purchase from the trustees of certain Family settlements made by me such immoveable properties therein comprised as they my Executors shall consider desirable to be included as part of the said Endowment and as the Government of India may approve and accept and I declare that it is my earnest wish in case any property comprised in the said Settlements is withdrawn therefrom by means of any Revocation or Revocations executed by me that my executors shall out of my general estates replace and make good in value all such withdrawals and I hereby will and direct accordingly. I lastly declare that any provision I may have made in my last Will or in any other codicil thereto regarding the said Endowment is hereby cancelled. In witness whereof I have hereunto put my hand at Bombay this sixteenth day of February One thousand and nine hundred.

Witnesses: Jamsetji N. Tata.

Ardesir Framjee Solr. B'bay.

Ardeshir J. Bilimoria.

**A Codicil of 5 September 1900 made in London elaborates on the Codicil of February 16.**

This is a Codicil to the last Will of me Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata of Bombay Parsee inhabitant now temporarily staying at No.7, Park Place, St. James. Whereas by a Codicil to my said Will, made by me at Bombay on the sixteenth day of February One thousand and nine hundred I have purported to provide for the endowment by means of certain property of mine a certain scheme of public utility promoted by me and which is about to be realised as and under the name of 'The Indian University of Research' and by the same Codicil I have revoked a similar provision made by me in and by the said last Will; And Whereas I made the last mentioned revocation in the belief that the provision for endowment made by me in and by the said Codicil would take effect so as to render the said a prior provision unnecessary but I did not intend that the said prior provision should be revoked in case the provision last mentioned failed to take effect; And Whereas I am advised that the said provision for endowment contained in my said Codicil can only have legal effect in case I survived the making of the said Codicil for a whole year. Now if I do not so survive as last aforesaid and if in consequence thereof or otherwise the said provision for endowment made in and by my said Codicil fail of effect, then I will and declare that the revocation hereinabove mentioned shall not take effect but on the contrary shall be null and void and the provision for endowment made in and by my said last Will shall have and take effect as if there had been no such revocation as aforesaid. In witness whereof I the said Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata have hereunto set my hand at London the fifth day of September One thousand and nine-hundred.

> Signed and acknowledged by the above named Jamsetjee Nusserwanji Tata as and for a Codicil to his last Will in the presence of us who at his request and in his presence and in the presence of each other have hereto set our hands as witnesses.
>
> Jamsetji N. Tata

**Codicil dated 20 January 1904** is on his family settlements No.1 and 2. He does not revoke his benefaction to the Indian University of Research.

# Appendix II

# The Tata Family Tree

# Appendix III

# Note to the Secretary of State for India

Jamsetji having found his man seems to have found incredible energy in applying himself to the steel and other project. He personally attended to the follow up of his major projects.

Below is a letter to Lord Hamilton's private secretary, within a couple of weeks of his return to Bombay.

Esplanade House, Bombay

December 24th, 1902.

To

The Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for India Downing St., London.

Sir,

I have the honor to submit for the information of His Lordship the Secretary of State for India—as directed during a conversation at the House of Commons—three memoranda on (1) the Scheme for Iron Mines in India (2) the Scheme for Electric Power & (3) the Cotton Duties on Indian Cloth. In connection with the last, I forward 6 copies of a monograph on Indian Cotton Mills.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

Sd/- Jamsetji N. Tata

His memos for Lord Hamilton reflect the intensity of his personal work and the depth of the information and the knowledge he collected. There is no evidence of any official accompanying him to the USA on his long second visit in 1902. It was a one-man show, though he seems to have started a small office that was more of a post office.

The memo from Jamsetji on iron mines needs to be quoted at some length to understand the personality of Jamsetji. This note was written when the location of Lohara was being explored.

J.N. TATA

Victoria Buildings, Fort,

Bombay, 24th December 1902.

RE. IRON MINES

The present position is this. The iron at Lohara is so rich that it presents difficulties in smelting. The coal in the neighbourhood is so poor that it won't coke by the ordinary processes. In the United States, under these circumstances, the problem is solved in different ways. Sometimes the ore is carried 600 miles to the coal (as by the Steel Trust of Carnegie in some instances). This is, of course, possible only because the railway freights are low enough not to handicap the price at which finished steel can be put on the market. Elsewhere, cheap 'natural gas' is employed, and works admirably. Then there are newer coking processes. *The sun, as a natural fuel, has hardly emerged out of the stage of a mere idea.* (Emphasis author.) Electricity is found not economical, producing more light than heat. Japan also has a similar problem; but as I was not able to visit the country, I am not in a position to say how the problem is solved there. Applying this experience to my problem of the Indian Iron Industry, I have caused both the coal and the iron of the Central Provinces to be experimented with. A leading German chemist has been able to coke in the Laboratory the Warora coal I shipped to him from India; the question now is whether he will be able to apply his process on a manufacturing scale. Warora coal will be exhausted in less than five years; so it is useless my experimenting with it any more. The Central Provinces Government promised to send me a consignment of their new Ballarpur coal; but as the mines are flooded, no specimens can be obtained for another six months . . .

The Leiters and one or two other American firms have also reported success in coking the Central Provinces coal by other processes. I have also been in communication with the Power Gas Corporation Co. Ltd., who have reported that 'the gas from these coals (coal from Umaria) would have a satisfactory calorific value, and that there would be no difficulty in smelting iron therewith'; also that 'the coals would work quite satisfactorily in Mond producers'. It will now remain to send them the coal in my concession, and try workshop experiments in smelting the Lohara iron.

His Lordship will see that the smelting of iron with the local coal is more hopeful than seemed at first, and that with the charcoal of the forests in the neighbourhood, cutlery steel is manageable. But even if it should ultimately prove that no economical process is possible with the local coals, there will remain the American Steel Trust alternative of sending the iron ore to the collieries of the North. A great portion of the demand for steel will be in the North; so that a portion of the freight in carrying the ore will be recovered from the saving in the carriage of steel. If the Government of India then make the same concessions of freight as the American Railways do to the Trust, this alternative may prove as practicable as the others based on chemical research. The freight rates per mile for American iron ore are 1/5th of the Indian Railway rates.

And one more remark in this connection. My American advisers point out that the iron industry is a risky undertaking everywhere and takes time to shake down to the condition of normal profits; to give it strength in infancy, it has been supported by State subventions—in Canada, Australia, New Zealand as well as the States. Canada gives a bounty of three dollars per ton, Australia twelve (?) shillings, and New Zealand, even with a bounty, has not been able to keep alive its iron industry. These preliminary questions of railway rates and State help will have to be discussed before the industry make a beginning in India. His Lordship will, it may be taken for granted, wish that if the industry is to be established at all, it should be on a durable basis; if undertaken without assurance of success, if it should fail, no body will touch it for two generations. The Government of India already guarantee interest to the capital invested in Railways, they contract to buy at fixed rates definite quantities of pig-iron from the Bengal Iron Company; they have announced that in the purchase of certain products they would give precedence to indigenous manufacture; and the Government of Mysore at least have helped by taking shares in one or two concerns which they wished to encourage. What shape Government help to the iron industry in India should take is a question which cannot be kept out of the discussion.

I hope that it will be possible to report further progress after the expert who has already left America, and is to join me at Nagpore on January 15 . . . For the present, diamond drills have been imported to bore to the depth of 800 feet, and one other is following to bore as deep as 3,000 feet. But I hope that the expert's advice may enable me to start experimental works to the value of Ls.30,000 [probably pound sterling] in 1903 or 1904.

His Lordship doubtless recollects that he was so good as to offer to bring me in communication with English Ironmasters, and to leave me the liberty of employing even American capital if needed. I do not think that American capital will be needed. I believe that a substantial portion of the capital will be found in India itself—I see signs of people taking up this industry with some enthusiasm; and two financial houses in England have conveyed to me their willingness to help in finding capital when the venture should emerge out of the experimental stage in which for some time it must remain.

Attached to this important Memo on the iron project is a handwritten note:

Esplanade House

Bombay.

December 25th, 1902.

My Lord

I have this day forwarded to your Private Secretary three Memos explaining the present position of the several schemes which I have had the privilege of discussing with you on various occasions. Your Lordship

will recollect that at our last interview at the House of Commons you were good enough to direct, that I should send from India Memoranda describing what I had seen and done in the United States. I am unable to show any progress about the Research Institute Scheme which, like everything else in India just now, awaits the conclusion of the Durbar. I trust that it will fall to your Lordship, before you leave the India Office, to do something with regard to the Cotton duties, and in any case, I beg to tender my most cordial thanks for the help & encouragement I have always received at your Lordships hands. If the industrial resources of India have not been developed more than they have during your regime it is because such things move along slower than people have any idea about.

Believe me, my Lord,

Yours very sincerely,

Jamsetji N. Tata

Lord Hamilton replied to Jamsetji on 6th March, 1903 as under:

India Office, London,

6th March, 1903.

Dear Mr Tata,

I must apologise for not answering before your letter of the 25th December, and the three interesting enclosures which accompanied it.

I take great interest in your schemes for the industrial and technical development of India, and I most carefully read the memorandum which you have sent me, in connection with the various subjects which you have in hand. I regret that there are obstacles, unforeseen at the time you made your proposition, which impede the realisation of your idea of a college of scientific research, and I think you are wise, under the circumstances, in concentrating your attention not on several but on one object, and devoting your experience, influence and wealth to the prosecution of that object. There are undoubtedly preliminary difficulties to be got over before you will be able to pronounce confidently that there is fuel available in India for the proper smelting of the unlimited deposits of iron ore in the Central Provinces and adjacent districts. I am glad to see that you have made substantial progress in testing the capacity of various fuels, and I have little doubt that, with persistency and the assistance of science, you will overcome these difficulties . . .

As regards the assistance which Government can give you, it has never been of recent years the policy of the British Government to foster infant industries by protection, and at the present moment the idea, which is gaining ground more and more throughout the British Empire, is to try and establish free trade within the limits of that Empire, thus increasing the exchange of commodities and productions between the different parts of the Empire. But as I have officially informed you, although the Government of India cannot make any special contracts with any

ironworks you may create to give you priority over other competitors, they will undoubtedly be always ready to accept tenders from local industries in India; and, assuming that they can tender at the same price and quality as outside competing firms, they should in my judgment be given priority over outside tenderers . . .' [Hamilton then discusses cotton duties and concludes:]

Wishing you all success in the various undertakings to which you are so usefully and patriotically applying your great experience and influence,

Believe me,

Yours truly

(Sd.) George Hamilton.

Jamsetjee N. Tata, Esq.

# Appendix IV

# Offers of Baronetcy to Jamsetji

In view of the generous benefaction to the University, Jamsetji was invited to a Conference on Education in Simla in 1899. It was a very select group of only eighteen people. On the sidelines of the Simla Conference an incident took place that is recalled by Sir Dorabji Tata in a letter to Bezonji Mehta on 30 October 1925. Mr Raleigh was Law Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. Sir Dorabji writes:

> Raleigh insinuated to Jamsetji that he knew full well that it was only in the case of a Baronetcy that such a (family) Trust could be created and that his asking for a Family Trust being joined on the Institute Trust was a delicate way of asking for a Baronetcy. Jamsetji at once flared up and though Raleigh said that he was prepared to offer a Baronetcy which was an easy way of securing the Family Trust, Jamsetji was very angry at the insinuation that his benefaction was only a veiled attempt to obtain Honours for himself, said that if Government had given him a Baronetcy without any idea of *quid pro quo,* he might not have declined: But after such an insinuation he absolutely refused to have a Baronetcy connected with his name, as what he did was for the benefit of India and not as means towards getting honours. Tyabji and Ranade (who were members of the Provisional Committee of the proposed Institute) were surprised and put out. They pointed out that any additional high title to those already existing* was a gain to India and urged him to accept it. But he would not alter his decision . . . Tyabji especially kept on urging Jamsetji to accept. When that did not work he (Tyabji) finally persuaded Padshah to approach me and my wife on the subject of our accepting the Baronetcy and then getting over the question of the Family Trust. Burjorji approached me first, but I asked him to place the proposition before my wife as I wanted to test her without expressing my own views. Without hesitation, and to my great delight and admiration, as I expected Meherbai indignantly refused even to hear of it. She said it would be disgraceful thing if in his life-time we contemplated accepting honours for what he had accomplished, when he himself refused them.

A second occasion when Jamsetji was sounded out on the baronetcy is mentioned by Sir Bezonji Mehta in a letter to Sir Dorabji on 29 October 1925. Bezonji Mehta asks Sir Dorabji why there was no

reference to the baronetcy in *J.N. Tata: A Chronicle of his Life* by F.R. Harris and goes on to state:

> I remember very well that one evening. Jamsetji and I were driving out after office hours, our carriage was stopped at the Times of India office, Churchgate Street, and Jamsetji was sent for by Mr Candy. Probably he was a member of the Governor's Council then and negotiating Jamsetji's offers for the Science Institute on a combined family and Science Institute Trust. Jamsetji came back to the carriage much vexed and irritated on being told that unless he accepted a Baronetcy, the family Trust could not be carried through. He declined at once the honour and allowed a family Trust to be dropped. He expressed his indignation to me as he entered his carriage exclaiming 'the talk is always of titles and honours and nothing else'. He then told me that had occurred upstairs. I know how repugnant to him was any title.

Sir Dorabji in his letter written the very next day writes about the above referred matter that in 1902, Candy as chairman of the Provisional Committee was asked to ascertain from him (Jamsetji) what honours he expected for his generous gift to India. 'The word "expected" again set Jamsetji's back up. Candy hinted that a Baronetcy, if asked for, would be forthcoming. Jamsetji again said that what he had done was not in any expectation of any honours, and declined to discuss the question. Candy wanted his answer in writing so that he could show the letter to the authorities and there might be no mistake. Jamsetji asked Burjourji to make a draft, which he did, and said therein that if he (Jamsetji) did not wish for any honours in return for his proposed endowment, he would not object if the offer was made to his sons instead. Jamsetji then asked that the draft should be shown to me. (My brother was then in England.) I at once struck out the sentence about his sons, made some slight alteration in pencil and added that all in return he wished for was that Government should do all in their power to help in establishing the Institute on a firm basis.'

The final letter as Candy had requested from Jamsetji on 29 June 1903 was as follows:

> My dear Mr Candy,
>
> With reference to our conversation this afternoon I should like to say, if I may, that while I cannot consider it open to me to otherwise than gratefully acknowledge any personal distinction conferred on me, it would be more in harmony with my feelings on the matter if the Research Institute could be established without a title being associated with it. I should, however, be much grateful if Government goodwill should take the form of helping to secure for the purposes of the Institute large

> supplementary benefactions from the rich men of the country, which might once and for all assure the success of the Institute . . .

This letter sums up Jamsetji's last word on the subject of baronetcy.

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# Preface

[*] Reprinted in 1958 by Blackie & Son with a Foreword by J.R.D. Tata.
[†] *Sunday Standard,* December 1984 and the *Tata Review*.

# 1

# Man of Destiny

[*] *Volume 2: From the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century,* p.125.

[†] Warren Hastings had established institutions for Arabic and Persian studies in Calcutta. Jonathan Duncan started a Sanskrit College in Benaras.

# 2

# The Parsi Renaissance

* ‘Parsi’ is an ethnic term for descendants of those who came from Iran. You have to be born a Parsi. You cannot be made one. Coreligionists, estimated at 15,000 to 30,000, still exist in Iran; they are Zoroastrians but they cannot be termed Parsis.

# 3

# Education and England

[*] See D.E. Wacha, The *Life and the Life Work of J.N. Tata,* p.3.
[†] D.E. Wacha, *The Life and Life Work of J.N. Tata,* pp.3-4.

# 5

# The Empress Adventure

* See Chapters 22 and 23 on hydro-electric power in Part Two of this book.
† Behram Saklatvala and K. Khosla, *Jamsetji Tata.*
‡ Jamsetji was a man known to dislike public speaking and this speech of 1895 is the only full speech the writer has seen.

# 6

# Return to Bombay

* A part of the Japanese and Chinese collections of Sir Dorabji and Sir Ratan Tata may have been inherited from their father. The two brothers added to it many other artefacts and presented the collection to the Prince of Wales Museum, Bombay.

† Wife of Sir William Ramsay who had come to report on Jamsetji's scheme for a university of research which later evolved into the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

‡ *Builders of Modern India Series,* co-authored with K. Khosla, pp.44-45.

# 7

# The Struggle for Svadeshi

[*] D.E. Wacha, The *Life and Life Work of J.N. Tata,* pp.32-33.
[†] D.E. Wacha, *The Life and Life Work of J.N. Tata.*

# 8

# Experiments in Egyptian Cotton, Coffee and Silk

* Behram Saklatvala and K. Khosla, *Jamsetji Tata,* p.71.
† Behram Saklatvala and K. Khosla, *Jamsetji Tata,* p.54.
‡ Published by The Salvation Army Headquarters, Simla in 1912, priced at 2 annas.

# 9

# A Venice at Juhu and Other Schemes

[*] *Jamsetji Tata,* p.111.

# 10

# Jamsetji and British Rule

* Published by Swan Sonnenscheim & Co. Ltd., London.

# 11

# The Challenge to British Interests

* Sir Valentine Chirol, *Indian Unrest,* p.277.
† This is the first and last time he proposed the use of the family name.
‡ *Parsee Prakash,* May 1887.

# 12

# An Endowment for Higher Education

* Mrs Piroja Vesugar was a formidable figure. Even seasoned scholars were reported to quake in her presence. In the 1940s she would personally take them to lunch and train some of them to eat with a fork and knife. Many had never done that before. She would get suits tailored for them and equip them with woollen clothes.

# 13

# The Nation His Business

* He had lent Rs. 3 lakh to Ahmedabad Advance Mills. It was poorly managed. As the largest creditor Jamsetji had first claim on it. After a wrangle, on payment of Rs. 2,03,515 Jamsetji took it over in 1900. As in Svadeshi Mills he put his best people from Nagpur to revive it. He had no desire to start another mill but was only protecting his own interest.

† Address to the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 1962.

‡ In the foreword to the first edition *J.N. Tata: A Chronicle of His Life* by F.R. Harris, p.vii.

# 14

# The Era of Lord Curzon

* Percival Spear, A *History of India, Volume 2.*
† Morris W. Travers, A *Life of William Ramsay,* p.197
‡ Lovat Fraser, *India Under Curzon and After,* pp.25-26.

# 15

# An Idea Takes Shape

* *History and Culture of the Indian People,* Vol. X, Part II, p.95.
† 9 February 1899.
‡ pp.465-66.
§ † p.468.

# 16

# The Struggle

* For the complete Will see Appendix I.

# 17

# The Fruition

[*] *The Life and Life Work of J.N. Tata,* pp.58-59.

# 18

# The Preparation

* Readers who wish to know how Jamsetji followed up by letters to the office of the Secretary of State for India and with Lord George Hamilton personally may see Appendix III. He also wrote similar detailed notes on hydro-electric power and cotton duties to the Secretary of State for India.

# 19

# Finding the Right Man and the Right Location

* *TISCO Review,* November 1933.

# 20

# Unearthing India’s Hidden Wealth

* His spacious property in Pune was bought by Tatas after his death. The Tata Management Training Centre (TMTC) is housed there.

# 24

# The Taj Mahal Palace Hotel

* The Gateway of India came up only in 1924 to commemorate the visit of King Emperor George V and Queen Mary in 1911. Before that at the Gateway site sahibs used to sit at tables sipping *burra* and *chotta* pegs.

# 25

# The Men Jamsetji Built

* For more particulars see chapter ‘Tata Philanthropy’ of the revised edition of The *Creation of Wealth* by R.M. Lala.
† *Jame Jamshed,* 22 August 1941.
‡ For more details see *Beyond the Last Blue Mountain—A Life of J.R.D. Tata* by R.M. Lala.
§ *Tisco Review,* August 1941.
¶ *Tisco Review,* August 1941.

# 26

# The Shaping of Jamsetji Tata

* Burjorji Padshah to Lovat Fraser, 27 August 1912.

# 28

# The Last Journey

[*] Later the first Communist and the third Indian to be a member of the House of Commons.

[†] *Athornan Namu.*

# Epilogue

# An Evaluation of J.N. Tata: 1904-2004

* *Parsee Prakash,* Vol. IV, 1904, pp.58-60.

# Appendix IV

# Offers of Baronetcy to Jamsetji

* There were only two baronets in India then, Sir Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy and Sir Dinshaw Petit.

# Acknowledgements
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# THE BEGINNING

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